The UNESCO COURIER

INTERVIEW WITH JEAN LACOUTURE

Strangers on the screen

OCTOBER 1989
15 French francs

encounters

Ménilmontant
1985, painting (1m x 0.50m)
by Annette Ghéan-Bisciglia

"I have always dreamed of the Tropics but have never been able to go there," writes the French painter Annette Ghéan-Bisciglia. "But now the Tropics have come to Paris." The painting shown here was inspired by the immigrant presence in Paris.

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.

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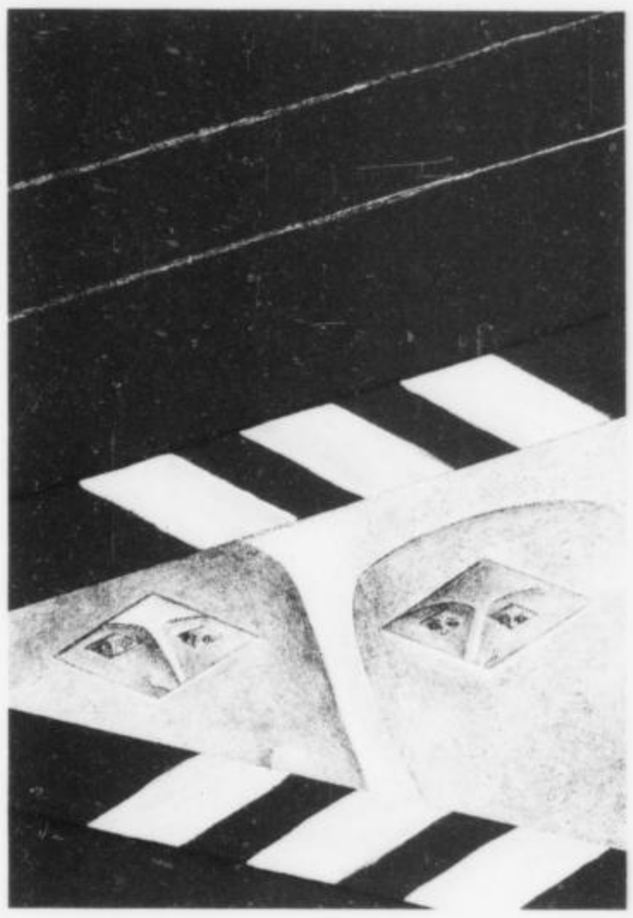

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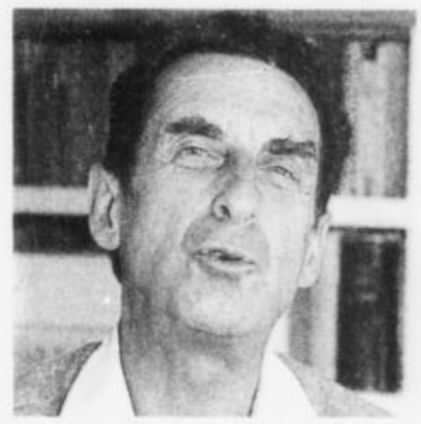

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SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

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Today there are no more unexplored continents, unknown seas or mysterious islands. But while we can overcome the physical barriers to exploration, the barriers of mutual ignorance between different peoples and cultures have in many cases still not been dismantled.

A modern Ulysses can voyage to the ends of the earth. But a different kind of Odyssey now beckons—an exploration of the world's many cultural landscapes, the ways of life of its different peoples and their outlook on the world in which they live.

It is such an Odyssey that the *Unesco Courier* now proposes to you, its readers. Each month contributors of different nationalities will provide from different cultural and professional standpoints an authoritative treatment of a theme of universal interest. The compass guiding this journey through the world's cultural landscapes will be respect for the dignity of man everywhere.

The UNESCO COURIER

Cover: Illustration by Brigitte Salom
Back cover: Detail of *Blaues Bild* ("Blue Picture", 1928), by the German sculptor and painter Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943). The picture forms part of an exhibition entitled *Peinture-cinéma-peinture* to be held in Marseille, France, from 15 October 1989 to 14 January 1990.

INTERVIEW

Jean Lacouture

Champollion, a hero of the Enlightenment

The French writer and journalist Jean Lacouture has travelled the world, notably covering major events in the emergence of the former colonized peoples. He is also the author of major biographies* in which historical intuition and psychological analysis are combined with outstanding reportorial talent. In this *Unesco Courier* interview he describes the intellectual odyssey of Jean-François Champollion, a man in whom the ideals of Unesco seem to have found expression two centuries before their time.

Your portrait of Jean-François Champollion might have been specially designed to illustrate Unesco's mission of bringing the world's cultures into closer contact. Your hero's short life was dominated by his determination to enable Europeans to decipher the secrets of Egypt.

– Champollion was born in 1790, towards the end of the Enlightenment, of which he was one of the most worthy heirs. He was born a few months before the first performance of Mozart's *Magic Flute*, that crowning glory of the civilization of the Enlightenment.

Yet he came from Figeac, a small town in the Quercy region of France, which had scarcely been touched by the Enlightenment and was still shrouded in darkness.

I feel that it is quite staggering, almost Promethean, that Champollion should have been born in such circumstances, with a father who was a bookseller but had had little education, and a mother who may well have been illiterate, and yet he should have torn himself away, little by little, from the ties of the land to step out into the world of communication and knowledge. Admittedly, he embarked on his career with the help of his elder brother, who was something of a pathfinder. No pun intended, but it was his brother who "oriented" him. They were a fascinating pair. The close rapport that grew up between them was one of the main factors that prompted me to write the story of Champollion.

The first ray of light in the life of Jean-François was his schooling in Grenoble, first at the *lycée* and then at the university. This was the standard route by which it was possible to climb the cultural ladder in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Champollion was to negotiate it at prodigious speed. He arrived in Grenoble at the age of ten, went to the *lycée* at thirteen and became a university professor at nineteen, after having studied at the Collège de France and the Ecole Pratique des Langues Orientales in Paris. He shot out of the darkness into the light like an arrow.

The same kind of lightning career can be seen in the Third World in our time, with such outstanding people as Taha Hussein, the son of an illiterate peasant and blind into the bargain. Yet he became a university lecturer and then a minister, and his literary output was of the highest order. A career like his, which went straight from almost total ignorance to a masterly command of ideas and language, is very striking and indeed moving.

To come back to Champollion, he must surely have had quite exceptional ability and talent?

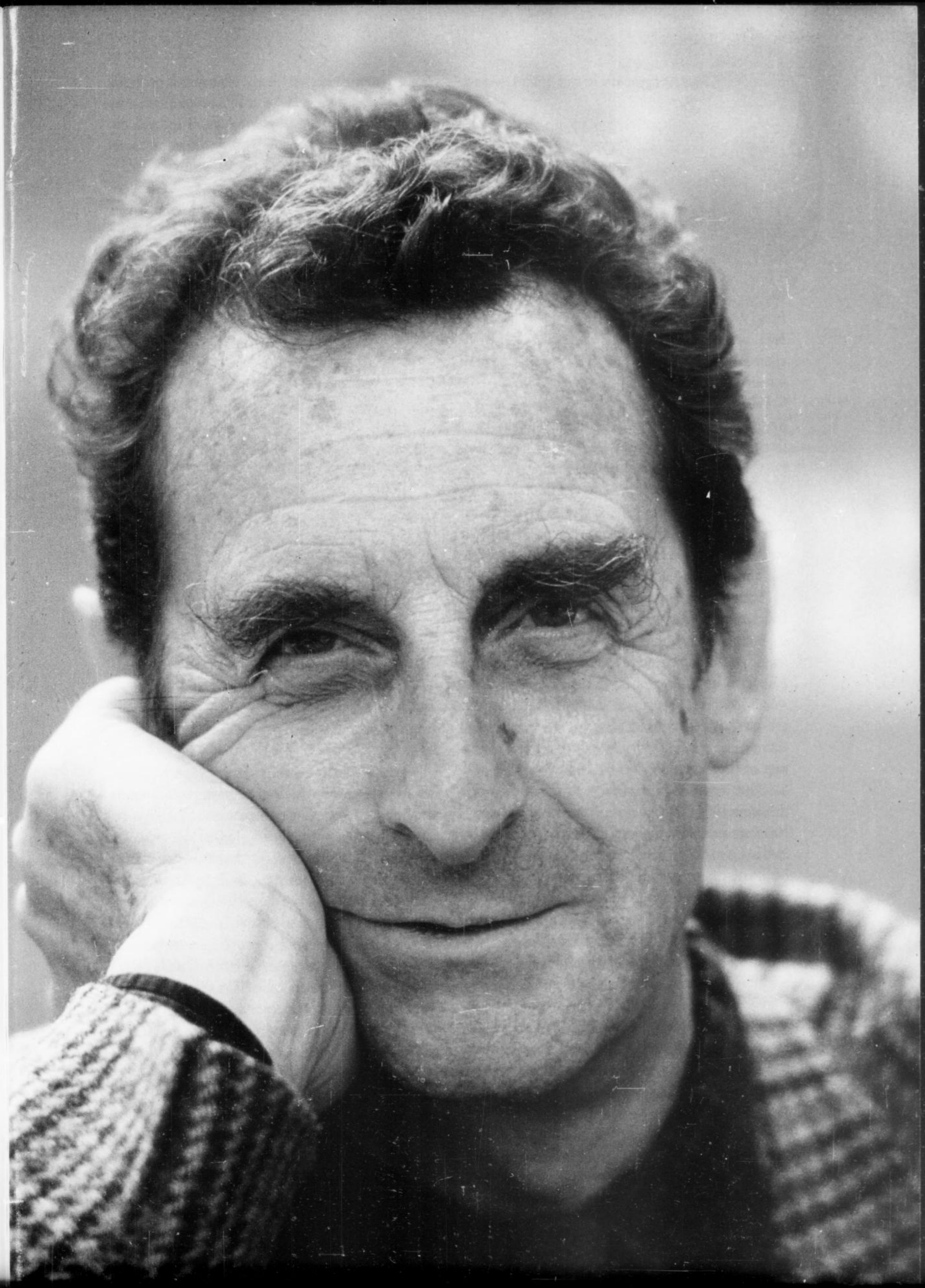
– There were three sides to his genius. In the first place, he was a highly gifted linguist. In the field of Oriental languages, his abilities were quite extraordinary. Before he was fifteen, he had learnt Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Geez, Syriac and Aramaic. In order to have something to do on Sundays, he asked his brother to send him a Chinese grammar. He had already made up his mind to decipher hieroglyphic script and he felt that Chinese might prove useful in his research. When he was fifteen he started to learn Coptic, but we'll come back to that.

He was also a dedicated historian. The lectures he gave at the University of Grenoble have been found and they show that he was already taking a critical approach to history, a discipline which was starting to equip itself with the tools of scientific thinking.

Thirdly, he was an artist, a man with a very keen aesthetic sense, and that was to be a very important factor in his attempts to decipher hieroglyphs. He was captivated and inspired by the beauty of Egyptian art. He already sensed that there was a fundamental link between the art and the writing of Egypt and that the script itself was an art form. His artistic sensibility was therefore to be one of the means he used to penetrate the mysteries of hieroglyphic script. He continually progressed on the linguistic, historical and aesthetic planes alike.

Moreover, he was an extremely generous, warm-hearted man who loved his fellow men. It was perhaps because he had had an unhappy love-life that he projected onto Egypt the very deep affection he felt within himself and transformed his loving urge into the desire to plumb the secrets of that great civilization and identify with it.

* Including his recent *Champollion, une vie de lumières* (Grasset publishers, Paris, 1988). Volume 1 of his 3-volume life of Charles de Gaulle was published in English in 1988 as *Charles de Gaulle: The Rebel* by Holmes and Meier, New York, who have also published his biographies of Léon Blum (1982) and Pierre Mendès-France (1984).



Shouldn't his love for Egypt also be seen against the background of his time?

— It's true that Champollion grew up in a period marked by what has been called "Egyptomania", when Egypt aroused great interest. Eighteenth-century Europe was avid for Egypt in all the senses of that term. Quite apart from the colonial projects that were afoot and the looting of the country's works of art, there was also, in many instances, a disinterested passion for knowledge.

Colonial appetites were whetted by Egypt, as they were by many other countries. However, Egypt appears to have been the object of a special fascination, as if the Europe of the Enlightenment had sensed that it held the secret of a source of wisdom affecting the whole of mankind.

— This period was, quite simply, a second Renaissance. The first Renaissance, in the sixteenth century, had come about through Europe's rediscovery of Graeco-Roman Antiquity, while the second, in the eighteenth century, stemmed from its recognition of the ancient cultures of the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean, such as Assyria, Babylon, Persia and, above all, Egypt. Europe was on the look-out for other civilizations and was intent on discovering the entire world.

This is the deep-rooted significance of the spirit of the Enlightenment. Mankind was one and indivisible. The imprint of mankind should be sought everywhere. True humanism was universal: it was no longer confined to Europe, as it had been in the sixteenth century; it was worldwide. Like Montesquieu and his Persians, Diderot and his "Savages", and Rousseau and his natural man, Champollion wondered who the real savages were when a tribe of Osage Indians visited the Louvre.

What is more, as Champollion saw things, the world existed not only in space but in time, across the centuries. He recognized that, in the eighteenth century, mankind existed in China, Morocco or Peru just as much as in France, but also that mankind had existed forty-five centuries earlier, when the Pyramids were being built. In deciphering hieroglyphs, he made a stupendous vertical breakthrough, plumbing the depths of the universe and coming closer to mankind's early roots. In so doing, he demolished many preconceived notions about human origins.

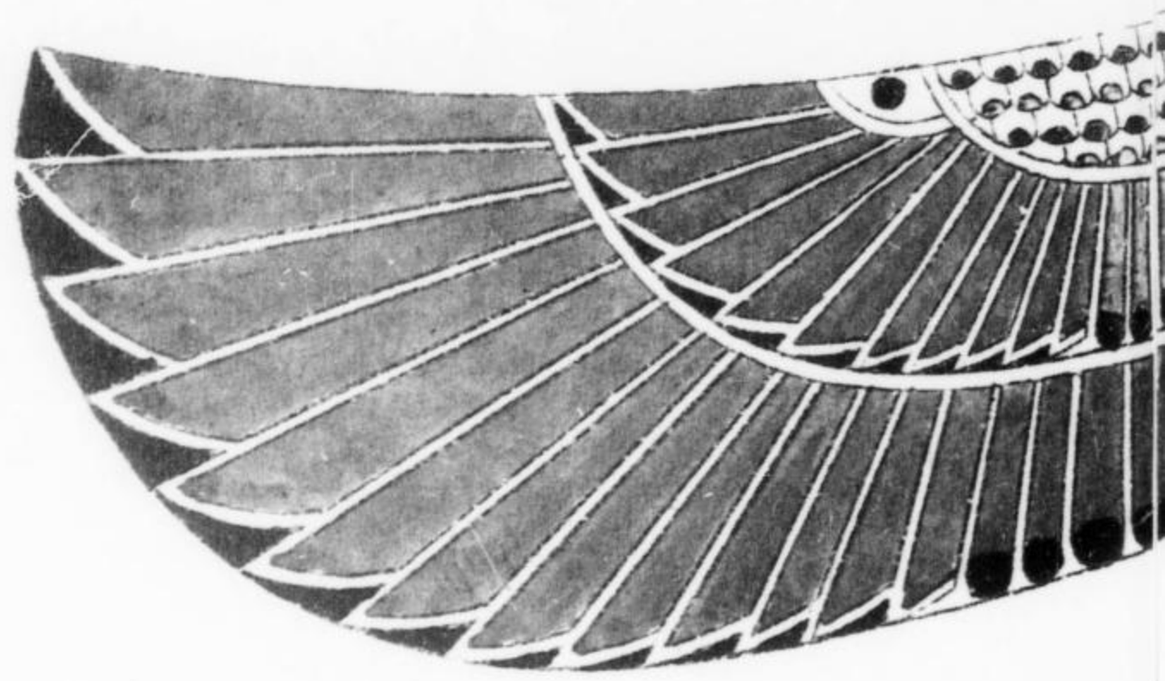
In his view, Egypt occupied a fundamental place as a matrix of history. He saw the first organized social unit as having emerged in Egypt, the source of European civilization filtered through Greece.

It's important to remember that he had had first-hand information on Egypt from a very early date, through meeting people who had been there.

— Among other things, European "Egyptomania" had spawned Bonaparte's expedition! Opinions may differ on the value of the different aspects of that expedition, but its scientific contribution was clearly admirable. It produced three treasures which gave rise to all subsequent research, especially the decipherment of hieroglyphs. These were the *Description de l'Egypte*, the illustrated report made by Vivant Denon, and the Rosetta Stone.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, people began to draw inspiration from the works of Vivant Denon. The Rosetta Stone began to be studied, and the *Description* was published. It was around this time that Champollion reached manhood. The coincidence between the blossoming of his own talents and the compilation of a stock of detailed knowledge on Egypt was entirely fortuitous.

In addition, Champollion was fortunate enough to meet three remarkable men—Fourier, Dom Raphael de Monachis and Cheftitchi—who had been involved with Bonaparte's expedition. Who could have imagined that Bonaparte would have the preposterous idea of appointing Joseph Fourier, the leading French physicist of his time and his companion

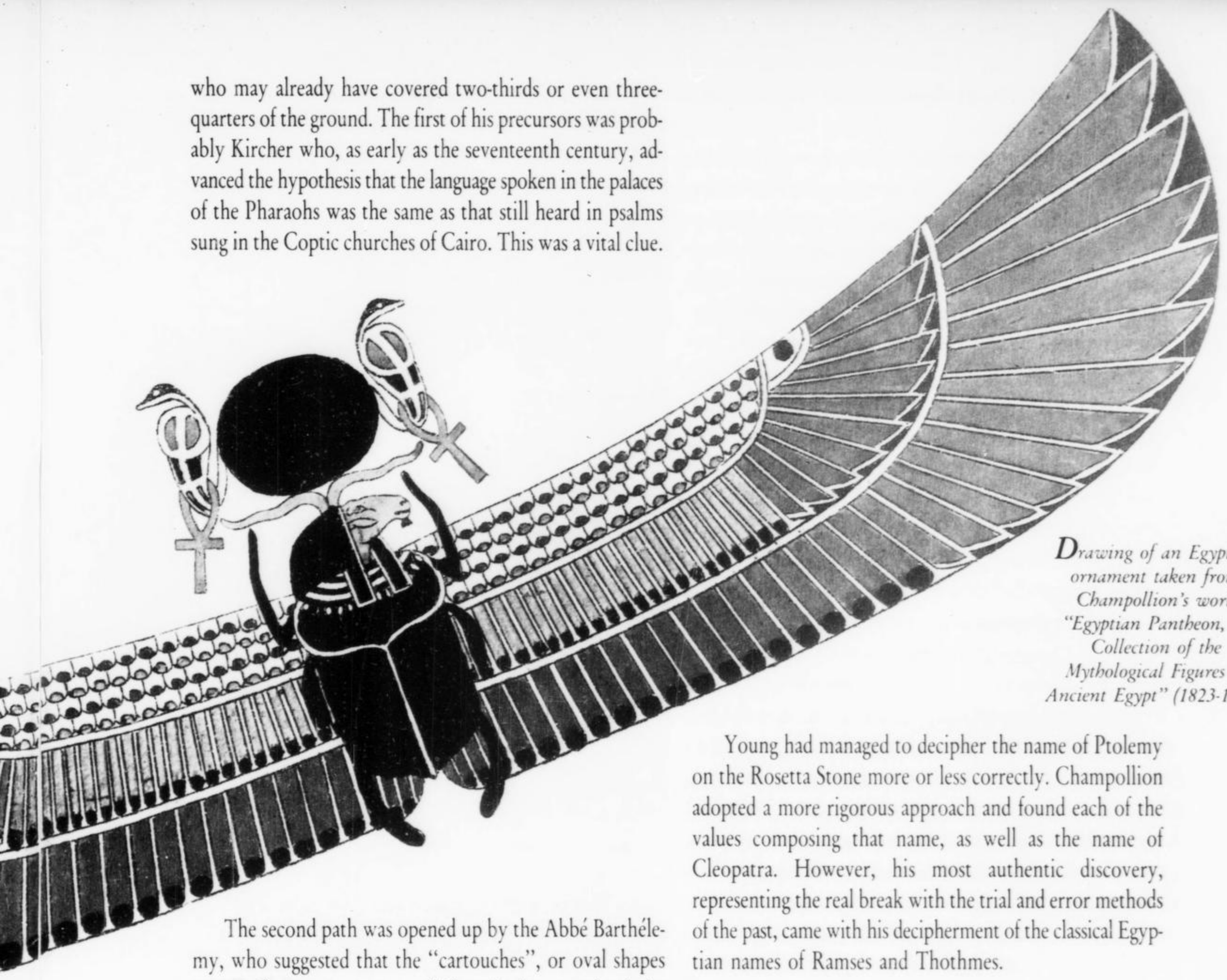


in Egypt, as Prefect at Grenoble, where he asked the Champollion brothers to help him write the preface to the *Description?* Or that Raphael de Monachis, a priest of Greek-Syrian origin, would come to visit Fourier in Grenoble and make the acquaintance of the brothers, thereby enabling Jean-François to improve his Arabic? Or that a Coptic priest named Cheftitchi would be appointed as an assistant at a church near to where Jean-François lived? Champollion was thus granted an opportunity of practising to his heart's content that little-known language which, he was convinced, was the key to everything. Champollion's command of the Coptic language was to be an important factor in the advance which he gained over his competitors in deciphering the hieroglyphs, since it was the spoken version of those same hieroglyphs. No great discoveries are ever made without a stroke of luck, and luck smiled generously on Jean-François.

Even so, he didn't start out from zero. Research had been carried out earlier and others were working in the field...

— Champollion was, of course, heir to what had gone before him. That is true of all inventors. Nothing important is ever discovered without the previous work of pioneers

who may already have covered two-thirds or even three-quarters of the ground. The first of his precursors was probably Kircher who, as early as the seventeenth century, advanced the hypothesis that the language spoken in the palaces of the Pharaohs was the same as that still heard in psalms sung in the Coptic churches of Cairo. This was a vital clue.



Drawing of an Egyptian ornament taken from Champollion's work "Egyptian Pantheon, or Collection of the Mythological Figures of Ancient Egypt" (1823-1825).

The second path was opened up by the Abbé Barthélemy, who suggested that the "cartouches", or oval shapes surrounding some groups of hieroglyphs, contained the names of kings. Since there were only a few dozen names, there was only a like number of possible readings in each cartouche. And there were only a few cartouches in the hieroglyphic inscription on the Rosetta Stone, one of which was known to contain the name of Ptolemy, since that name was mentioned in the Greek translation of the inscription.

The third breakthrough came right at the end of the eighteenth century, just before the actual discovery of the Rosetta Stone, when Niebuhr and Zoéga came to the conclusion that the hieroglyphs must contain a number of phonetic values.

After the discovery of the stone, Silvestre de Sacy, the leading Orientalist of the time, set about deciphering parts of it. The Swedish diplomat Akerblad thought that it was possible to draw up an alphabet of fifteen signs, and although this was to prove unworkable, it enabled ideas on the subject to move forward. Eventually, the great English physicist Thomas Young drew a spectacular comparison between sets of Greek signs and hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone. Young was the last and most brilliant of Champollion's precursors. The findings he arrived at by inspired step-by-step guesswork were ingenious. But there was no underlying method. It was Champollion who was to find the key to the hieroglyphic system.

Young had managed to decipher the name of Ptolemy on the Rosetta Stone more or less correctly. Champollion adopted a more rigorous approach and found each of the values composing that name, as well as the name of Cleopatra. However, his most authentic discovery, representing the real break with the trial and error methods of the past, came with his decipherment of the classical Egyptian names of Ramses and Thothmes.

In what way was that revolutionary?

– Until then, people—primarily Young, after the rough approximations of Akerblad—had managed to read a few names of Ptolemaic kings and queens, with signs that were all phonetic, such as Ptolemy (p, t, l, m) and Cleopatra (k, l, p, t, r). Two things then seemed credible: that the hieroglyphs were mainly phonetic, representing sounds, and that they had been invented in the Ptolemaic period to translate the names of contemporary sovereigns of Greek origin. In short, the script was confined to that period of decline and only made it possible to decipher the leftovers of Egyptian civilization, without providing any clue to the writing of that civilization at its zenith.

Champollion's revolution was based on two crucial discoveries, namely that the hieroglyphs were identical from one Pharaonic era to another and that the underlying principle was that they were composed of a mixture of phonetic and ideographic elements. That was his "Eureka!". That was the core of the discovery which led to the realization that the phonetic approach adopted in the Ptolemaic period was nothing more than a late simplification of a general rule. It was also understood why it had proved so difficult to find the key to the hieroglyphs. In fact there were two keys: one phonetic and the other ideographic.

By what path did Champollion reach that fateful moment of discovery?

— He reached it through deciphering the names of Thothmes and Ramses, two kings from the great classical period of the 18th and 19th dynasties. He came face to face with the main secret of the script. On a copy of one cartouche which had been sent to him, he found a red disk, which was bound to be an ideogram representing the sun. He translated it into Coptic, which gave him the word *Ra,* and then, below the disk, he found two signs with the phonetic values "m" and "s", giving "mses". By pairing the ideographic and phonetic values, he came up with "Ramses". In the case of Thothmes, the ideogram was an ibis, which represented the god Thoth, with the same two phonetic values "m" and "s". This took place on 14 September 1822.

Other pieces of the jigsaw fell into place in quick succession. Champollion noticed that some words were written from left to right, and others from right to left. He also discovered that some signs were there merely to signify gender or a family of meaning. This was how he realized that Hatshepsut was a woman. The identification of the determinative signs was another fundamental feature of the decipherment process.

So the celebrated date of 14 September 1822 was a tremendous moment, the point when he suddenly realized that he had grasped it all?

— Yes. It was a moment of incredible intensity for him. He had discovered the principle, the key. But he had no sooner announced the news to his brother than he fell into a sort of trance. He lay prostrate, as though he had been overwhelmed, as if the fantastic sum of the efforts he had made over a period of twenty years had triggered off an explosion, like a terrifying discharge which condemned him to exhaustion and total emptiness, now that the goal had been attained.

Yet it was not all over. There still lay before him the formidable task of drawing all the conclusions from the discovery and of systematizing them.

— Naturally. But there were two other moments of extreme intensity in his life. These were when, armed with his discovery, he went first to Italy and then to Egypt, in search of the civilization on which he had shed light and which he was to read like an open book.

In the first place, during his visit to Turin to examine the wealth of Egyptian treasures in the museum there, he discovered the beauty of Egyptian art. His reaction was one of pure emotion. In Paris, the linguist had won the day, but in Turin it was the aesthete who was overwhelmed. It was not long before the historian, in his turn, was excited by the piles of papyri which nobody before him had been able to decipher.

But there was another dramatic moment, which he described in a passage worthy of Chateaubriand: the papyri

were so fragile that they crumbled into dust as soon as he touched them. We can well imagine the feeling that took hold of him. There he was, so near to his goal, with all the skills needed to discover, in each of those documents, a page of history that had lain buried for thousands of years, and then that page disintegrated in his hands. All those dynasties that were reunited before his eyes were decomposed in a flash. It was both marvellous and terrifying for him.

Champollion tells us that these papyri had been taken from their natural environment. They had been produced in Egypt from an indigenous plant and were meant to be covered and kept in bamboo canisters, but here they were, instead, placed in packing cases, tossed about for weeks on end on the sea voyage, exposed to the deadly effects of humidity, and dumped any old how in the rooms of the Turin museum. Fortunately, museum science has made progress since then...

Then came, at long last, the voyage to Egypt, where the country, its light and its people revealed themselves to him. It was as if his decipherment of the hieroglyphs had miraculously opened a door to Egypt and enabled him to identify with its civilization.

— The comparison that comes to my mind is with the great mystics. When Champollion entered the Hypostyle Hall

Champollion's camp at Philae is depicted in this watercolour by Nestor L'Hôte, an artist who accompanied the great French Egyptologist on his expedition to Egypt in 1828-1829.

or when he descended into the tomb of Ramses VI or of Seth I, I think that he felt the emotion of a mystic discovering the countenance of Christ. It was not so much the culminating point of his work as the crowning glory of his life. His decipherment of the hieroglyphs gave him a direct insight into Egyptian civilization. The monuments spoke to him through their very beauty. He saw their architecture as a kind of prayer, a form of expression responding to that of the hieroglyphs. As he said in one of his letters: "Egyptian statuary is a simplified form of hieroglyphic writing."

Whenever a Pharaoh built a temple to his own glory, the symbolic language he used was more direct and positive than that of a cathedral. There was a physical link between the art and the writing of the Egyptians. Champollion threw himself heart and soul into substantiating this idea. He spent eighteen months in Egypt—eighteen extraordinary months during which he went back across the centuries and fathomed the innermost meaning of Egyptian civilization. In this setting, the cry he uttered on 14 September 1822 became a magnificent hymn to knowledge. But it was also to be his swansong.

What makes that hymn even more moving is the fact that it projected on Egyptian civilization a beam of light which swept away a number of preconceived ideas about Judeo-Christian civilization and which conveyed to Europe a message glimpsed in the eighteenth century but perhaps not very well received in the nineteenth—that Egypt was the cradle not only of human history but of religious thought.

Could monotheism have been invented in Egypt? Such a hypothesis is often accepted. However that may be, the great Christian Trinity seems to have been founded on that of Osiris, Isis and Horus. The originality of Christian dogma is thus called into question. Champollion sparked off a genuine cultural and spiritual revolution. He clearly felt this himself, just at the time when he was returning to the Christian fold. His Song of Egypt was not altogether free of a note of anguish.

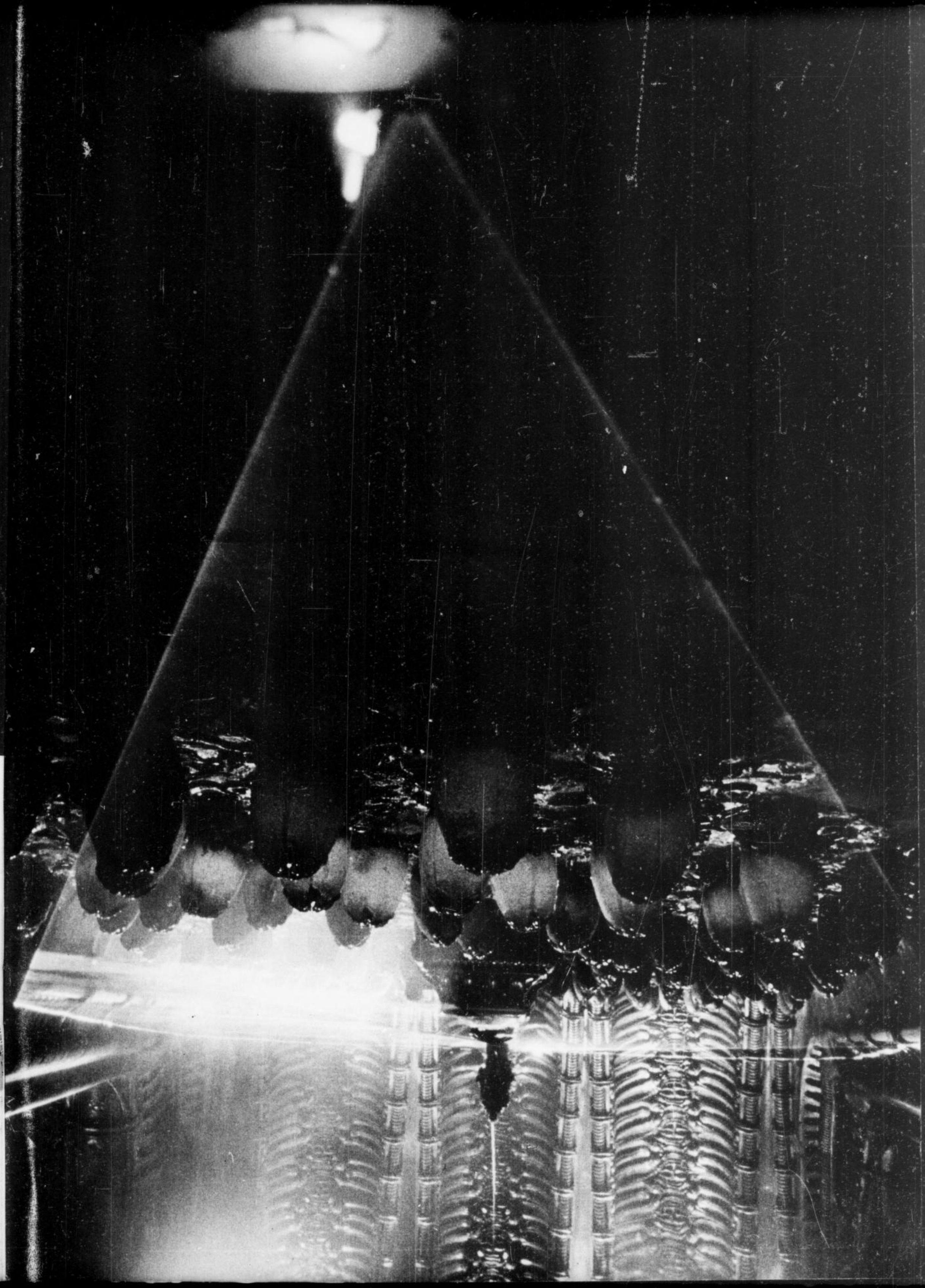
Moreover, Champollion's dialogue was not only with ancient temples, but with the flesh-and-blood Egyptian people, with the Egypt of his time.

– That's true. Not only was he appalled by the state of oppression and dire poverty to which the Egyptian people were reduced, but he ran the risk of speaking openly about it to the Pasha—not the most obvious course to take. Muhammad Ali had received him cordially and had allowed him to go wherever he liked in the country for as long as he liked—and remember that this was scarcely one year after Egypt had suffered the debacle of the Battle of Navarino against the French and English fleets. Champollion could therefore have simply turned a blind eye to the situation, since his mission was not a humanitarian one. But he chose not to. Shocked by the sufferings of the Egyptian people, he made a point of voicing his dismay to Muhammad Ali. The example he set was not followed by every Orientalist.

He also drafted a fourteen-point memorandum on "the safeguarding of the monuments of Egypt", a document in advance of its time. He had very strong views on the need for the *in situ* protection of the monuments at their original sites and, above all, on the need to respect the right of Egyptians to keep their masterpieces of art in their own country. Some years earlier, when the zodiac in the Temple of Hathor at Dendera had been dragged out and shipped to France to be erected in Paris, Champollion had written that the best home for the monument was at Dendera itself.

Nor should we forget the plans which Champollion made for the Egypt of his time, such as the proposal to explore the sources of the Nile which he put to Ibrahim Pasha. The idea of suggesting a peaceful scientific expedition to that great warrior seems to me to be worthy of the spirit of the Enlightenment and far ahead of its time.

The two hundredth anniversary of Champollion's birth will be commemorated in 1790. The time is ripe for a celebration and I imagine that Unesco will be marking the occasion. ■



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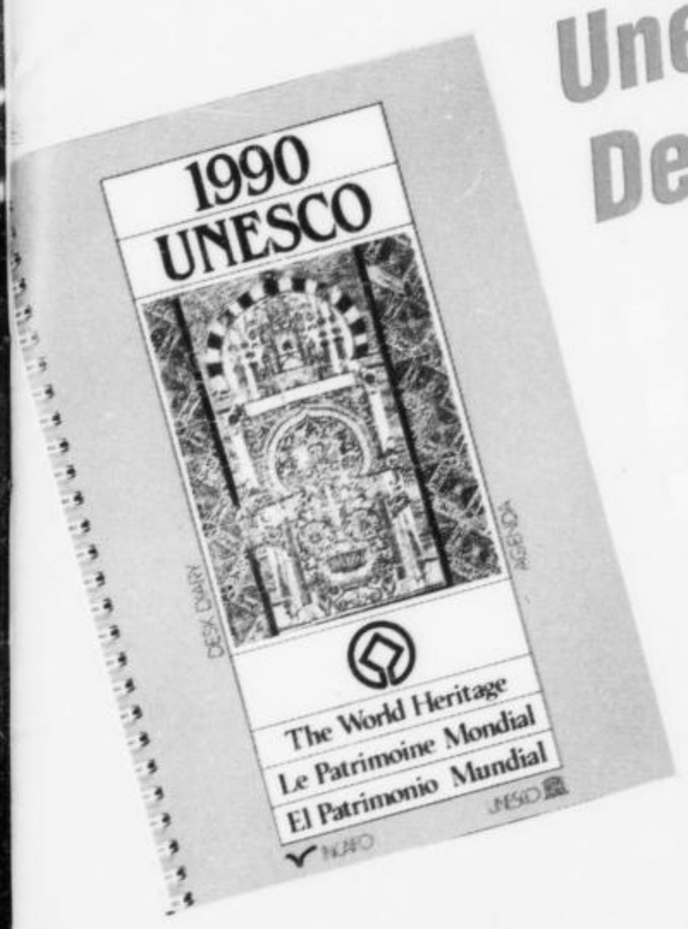

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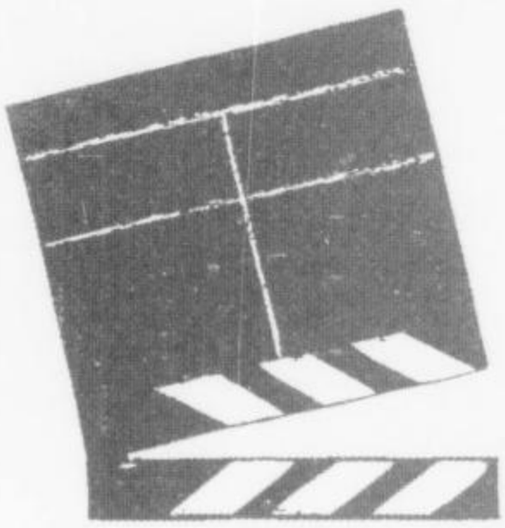
EDITORIAL



SINCE *Homo sapiens* first trod the earth some five hundred thousand years ago mankind has been torn between an instinctive fear of the unknown and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. For early man all that was unknown was hostile. The unseen was a menacing presence that lay in wait for the unwary. Only within the familiar ordered confines of the clan was safety to be found.

Today the bounds of the known world have been extended to their limits, the frontiers of knowledge have been pushed back and contacts and exchanges with others have multiplied beyond all expectations. Everywhere men have come to acknowledge the existence of their fellow men and the destinies of communities and individuals have become interlinked on a worldwide scale.

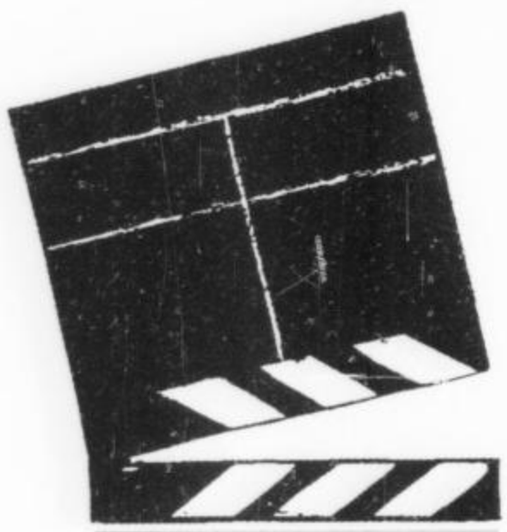
The cinema, one of the major art forms of this century, has played an important role in this process and in making us more fully aware of the diversity of the human condition. It has shown us the splendours of the Taj Mahal and the Pyramids, the onion-shaped domes of Moscow, the temples of the Maya, the skyscrapers of New York. We have seen great cities devastated by earthquake, fire and flood, peoples decimated by famine and all the man-made horrors of war. We feel that we are beginning to know what other peoples are like, what they love and what they fear.

Nevertheless, even today, "others" too often continue to be, if not totally unknown, at least strangers and potential enemies. For this too the cinema bears some responsibility. The eye behind the camera sometimes sees and records happenings that seem to confirm our deeply-ingrained prejudices. It would seem that we still feel threatened by "others", that the need remains to continue to set up boundaries, to draw demarcation lines, to mark out for ourselves and for our kind a clearly defined territory—whether physical, spiritual or psychological—from which "others" are excluded.

We need not despair. More and more film-makers are rejecting facile, stereotypic representations and showing us the kinship that underlies the glory and the wonder of the human pageant. The barriers of taboos and fears are being torn down to reveal "others" miraculously transformed into "brothers".

A scene from the film ***Alien*** *(1979).*

Creatures from inner space



Extraterrestrial phenomena created for the screen by directors from Méliès to Spielberg often reflect human fears and anxieties.

BY CLAUDE AZIZA

IF it is accepted that science fiction is a literary form that has existed since Antiquity, then extraterrestrial phenomena or "ETs", can also be acknowledged as enjoying the same venerable status. Admittedly, the travellers in the ancient Greek satirist Lucian's *Vera Historia (True History)* and in the seventeenth-century French writer Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre Monde (A Voyage to the Moon with some account of the Solar World)* visited only the Sun and the Moon, the two most familiar heavenly bodies. But the ET in Voltaire's *Micromégas* (1752) came from the star Sirius—whence his rather special outlook. These imaginary creatures were simply a mouthpiece for their creators' political, metaphysical or psychological ideas.

Terrifying ETs which had lives of their own first appeared in the late nineteenth century in the stories of H.G. Wells. Their aggressiveness, as in the case of the Martians in *The War of the Worlds* (1897), was a reflection of the imperialistic currents of the time. This trend persisted for several decades, at least in the Western world.

Around this time, the extraterrestrial made its début in the cinema, then in its infancy. In his celebrated film *Le voyage dans la lune* ("Trip to the Moon", 1902), the French director Georges Méliès depicted the Moon itself as being endowed with life. After Méliès, who was primarily interested in magical effects, came the age of the comic strip and the film cartoon. But the worlds visited by Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers were still very like the real world.

Then came the memorable day—30 October 1938—when Orson Welles terrified millions of American listeners when he announced during a radio programme based on H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* that invaders from Mars had landed. Behind these imaginary Martians it was possible to glimpse the dark scourge looming on the other side of the Atlantic.

The war followed, with its horrors and obsessions, including spy mania. Then, around 1947, flying saucers began to be spotted at every street corner. With the coming of the Cold War, hordes of creatures from outer space invaded cinema screens, setting a pattern for the next ten years or more.

The scene was set in 1950 with Kurt Neumann's *Rocketship X-M*, which depicted Martians who had lapsed into the barbarous practices of the Stone Age. Thereafter, ETs were uniformly belligerent and repulsive, from the slimy invaders of Byron Haskin's *The War of the Worlds* (1953), which was based on H.G. Wells's novel, to the giant octopuses of Val Guest's *The Quatermass Experiment* (1955), the first in a series of adventures featuring Professor Quatermass, and the gelatinous mass in Irwin S. Yeaworth's *The Blob* (1958).

Some films were less far-fetched, and sometimes not without ambiguity. In Edgar G. Ulmer's *The Man from Planet X* (1951), the solitary ET which lands on the Earth and dies there is actually the forerunner of a coming invasion. There are both good and bad ETs in Joseph Newman's *This Island Earth* (1955). Robert Wise's *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) is the only film of the period with something positive to say, in the sense that its hero, Klatoo, brings a message of peace from another planet.

In the 1960s, détente was the order of the day. Even though the hideous ET persisted here and there, times were changing. Japanese films still showed ETs avid for flesh, as in Inoshiro Honda's *Chikyu Boeigun* ("Prisoners of the Martians", 1958), Italian film-goers shuddered when they saw Mario Bava's *Terrore nello spazio* (1965), and in Britain hideous plants were intent on destroying the human race in Steve Sekely's *The Day of the Triffids* (1962), based on a novel by John Wyndham. Americans, however, were already smiling at the amorous antics of an ET and a pretty rock'n'roller in T. Graef's *The Teenagers from Outer Space* (1959), being moved by a strange

Poster for Spielberg's E.T. (1982), in which a crew member of an alien spacecraft is left behind in a Los Angeles suburb and makes friends with a small boy.

In The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951), Klatoo (centre) arrives on Earth from another planet with a message of peace.

visitor in H. Green's *The Cosmic Man* (1959), and splitting their sides with laughter at the blunders committed by a Martian played by Jerry Lewis in *Visit to a Small Planet* (1959). Had the ET finally been tamed, domesticated, humanized? People may have come to realize that political enemies, whether within or without, were less dangerous than the enemy stalking in their unconscious. This was the message, albeit clothed in symbolism, that was hinted at as early as 1956 in F. McLeod Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet.*

Aliens and monsters

ETs accordingly seemed to have been discarded among the unused props, as films began to reflect the realistic approach demanded by the conquest of space. Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) marked the end of an era of far-fetched sci-fi films and raised metaphysical questions amidst a profusion of scientific detail.

But what science fiction writers called the "hard science" of the conquest of space did not satisfy young film-goers who had grown up with space travel and looked in vain for the fantasy which their parents had enjoyed. In an effort to win them over, there was a return to the epic form. George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) rekindled childhood dreams and revived medieval legends. Only a short step separates the epic from mysticism, and that step was taken by Steven Spielberg in his *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), in which he retold the Bible in his own fashion, and subsequently in *E.T.* (1982), his version of the New Testament. As the Christ-figure of the space age with limitless powers, capable of dying and of coming back to life, the film's hero brought tears to American eyes. Would ETs now be part of a world of wisdom and humanism? That was unfortunately not to be, for new causes of anxiety were starting to emerge.

The end of the millennium promised to be apocalyptic. Fear of others was personified in the "alien", a term which was to have considerable success and was first used in 1979 in Ridley Scott's film of that title, in which a monster from outer space conceals itself in the entrails of its victim. A year earlier, similar alien creatures had lived off the brains of human beings transformed into vegetables in Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.* In John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982), the creature is capable of adapting to and assuming the appearance of all forms of life. People can no longer trust each other and are condemned to live with the threat of imminent annihilation.

Aliens (the title, incidentally, of the sequel to Carpenter's film, made by James Cameron in 1986) sprouted everywhere, harking back to the tradition of the 1950s but borrowing the most gruesome aspects of the popular horror film. These films covered the whole gamut—from the metamorphosis of fathers (H. Broomley Davenport's *XTRO,* 1986), to menaced progeny (Norman J. Warren's *Inseminoid,* 1980), vampires from outer space (Tobe Hooper's *Life Force,* 1985) and a ferocious monster (J. McTierman's *Predator,* 1987). And then to cap it all along came Jack Sholder's *Hidden* (1988), in which the Earth is simply a vast outlet for the aggressive instincts of an ET which even turns to bank robbery.

A few films have attempted to portray friendly child ETs (John Hough's *Return from Witch Mountain,* 1978), meetings between human and ET teenagers (Joe Dante's *Explorers,* 1985), and understanding visitors who can restore lost youth (Ron Howard's *Cocoon,* 1985, and its sequel, Daniel Patrie's *Return of Cocoon,* 1988). ETs have even taken the form of glamorous blondes that Earthlings can marry, as in Richard Benjamin's *My Stepmother is an Alien* (1988).

But, on the threshold of the 1990s, there is a persistent sense of danger. It may be a danger that has infiltrated society from within, as in John Carpenter's *They Live* (1988), or it may come from outside, from Martians seeking regeneration through nuclear energy in the aptly titled television series *Contamination, or the New War of the Worlds,* made by Colin Chilvers and Winrich Kolbe in 1988. In the same year Tobe Hooper's *Invaders from Mars* and Chuck Russell's *The Blob* were again on the rampage.

Fortunately, there is some humour among all these atrocities. In addition to *Martians,* a comedy by Patrick Read in which the Martians, after hesitating, decide to take control of Earth, F. Brown's novel *Martians Go Home!,* a crazy farce based on the fantasies of a science fiction writer, is being adapted for the screen. Such fantasies inspire the thousand-and-one metamorphoses of ETs, those ambivalent creatures spawned by the anguish, hopes and repressions latent in every society. ■

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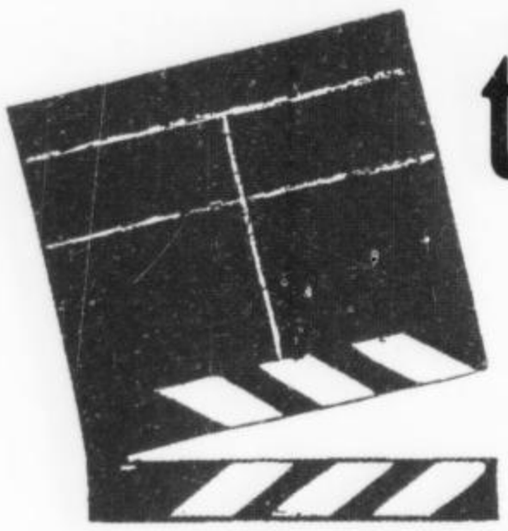
Macunaïma, the eternal outsider



From a Brazilian film-maker, a fable about individualism told through the astonishing adventures of a protean hero.

BY ANTONIO RODRIGUES

IN a structured, well-defined society it is easy to pick out the outsider, the person who is different from everyone else. In France, the United Kingdom or the Federal Republic of Germany, the cinema returns repeatedly to the theme of immigration, turning out naturalistic films about second-generation immigrants. The latter are seen as foreigners, outsiders, since a clear, if arbitrary, line of demarcation still separates them from the local population.

The situation is more complicated in emerging countries or in mixed societies. In Brazil, for example, on the outer edge of the Western world, a variety of races, cultures and ways of life which span the archaic and the modern coexist side by side. Brazil is European in its language, its legal code and some of its customs, but African in its beliefs and patterns of everyday life. In this melting-pot almost anyone could see his neighbour as an outsider and no one is truly representative of any particular social category.

The film *Macunaïma,* made in 1969 by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade (1932-1988), has become a classic of modern Latin American cinema precisely because it succeeded in conveying the curious state of "generalized otherness" that exists in Brazil. One of the merits of the film—a fable in which, provided that you can interpret a few clues, Brazilian society can easily be recognized—is that it can be understood by and is attractive to film-goers who have only a superficial knowledge of Brazil.

The hero, Macunaïma, is a black man born into an Indian tribe. One day he decides to set out with his brothers for the big city. On the way, he walks through a magic fountain and miraculously turns white (one of his brothers, who arrives too late, only has the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet turn white). On reaching Rio de Janeiro, he has a number of adventures. He marries a woman guerrilla fighter, is widowed and then tries to steal a talisman from a rich giant. Finally, tired of it all, he returns to the jungle with a whole range of consumer goods (air-conditioners, refrigerators, etc.). Caught up once more in a life of idleness, he ends up being devoured by a river siren.

The film is an adaptation of a novel of the same name by Mario de Andrade, published in 1928. However, the director filled out the story with new episodes (those concerning the

Poster for ***Macunaïma.***

AAAI QUE PREGUIÇA !!!
GRANDE OTELO PAULO JOSÉ JARDEL FILHO
MACUNAíMA
DINA SFAT RODOLFO ARENA MILTON GONÇALVES
TÁ GOSTOSO, CORAÇÃO, TÁ?
DIREÇÃO
JOAQUIM PEDRO DE ANDRADE
PRODUÇÃO
PRODUÇÃO EXECUTIVA
X. M. ECKSTEIN

Macunaïma's mother carries her young son on her shoulders.

Macunaïma's mother and sister-in-law outside a straw hut.

Macunaïma's enemy, the capitalist (left) throws a party.

guerrillas were of topical interest in Brazil in 1969), and left out passages in the book that were primarily of linguistic interest. Furthermore, he adopted the typical style of a certain class of comic film popular in Brazil, particularly in the sequence dealing with the birth of Macunaïma and in regard to the physical appearance of the giant.

Thus the mainspring of *Macunaïma,* in the words of its director "a Brazilian film devoured by Brazil", is otherness.

In turn Indian, Black and White, savage and city-dweller, proletarian and profiteer, Macunaïma never belongs to a clear-cut category. He is always an outsider, even though he seems at ease in all situations. The notion of otherness implies a clash between cultures, a confrontation, or at least a sense of difference. In *Macunaïma* there is no clash. The hero goes from one extreme to the other, from a poverty-stricken tribe to the financial district of Rio de Janeiro, a city which he reaches in a truck full of immigrant workers and in which he mixes with prostitutes, terrorists who die through their own carelessness (they do not know how to handle their bombs), and greedy industrialists. However, Macunaïma is not just a passive, disillusioned onlooker observing the world in which he finds himself. Even though his primary objective is the search for easy pickings (he becomes a kept man and, to acquire riches, attempts to steal the giant's talisman), he takes part, in his own fashion, in the life of the very different circles in which he moves.

This social mobility and his succession of apparently disconnected adventures find their own logic within the context of an extravagant, exuberant fable. The film tells a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, with episode following episode in a far from haphazard order. *Macunaïma* is a piece of story-telling rather than the illustration of a thesis.

The only world to which the hero really belongs is his family, which consists of the entire tribe into which he was born. Outside this family he constantly finds himself face to face with a world which he distrusts and in which he sees only adversaries. Macunaïma takes each successive adventure as it comes. A brothel or the guerrilla girl's hiding-place are for him no more than provisional, interchangeable stopping-places, where, with no concern for others' motives, he looks to his own immediate interests. It is as if the words of the truck driver who took him to Rio are still ringing in his ears: "Now it's every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." He is the eternal outsider, never putting down roots or becoming integrated anywhere. He is the new arrival, always embarking on some new enterprise which will never be carried through to the end. Macunaïma never acquires any more than a superficial knowledge of those he meets and himself remains unaffected by these encounters. He looks no further than the immediate, all-devouring present, until the day when he himself is devoured. Not knowing what he is seeking, he follows his chosen path unquestioningly.

The comic tone of the film and its presentation as a fable conceals a deeper truth—we are hostile or indifferent to outsiders because we do not know what motivates them. Macunaïma is not a solitary hero in the style of the wandering cowboy or lawman of the western; he lives only for the moment and is constantly having to save his skin in a world which, in the words of the director of the film, "is essentially cannibalistic".

For Macunaïma, as for all those without code or creed and entirely absorbed by themselves, other people are always an impenetrable mystery and the world is opaque. Everyone else is "Them". ■

At the end of the film, Macunaïma (right) returns to his tribe from Rio de Janeiro with a load of modern gadgets.

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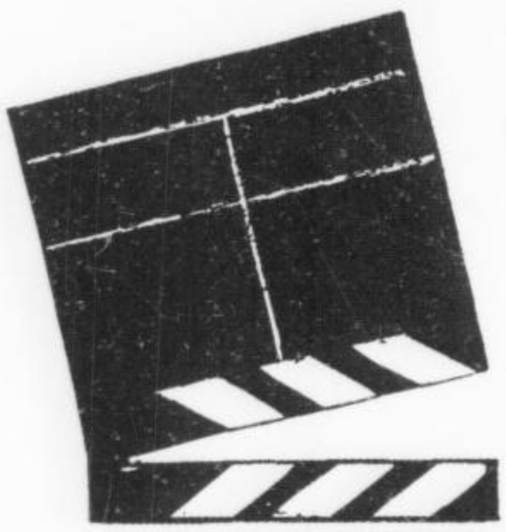
Germans screened through French eyes



Although sometimes drawn as stereotypes, German characters in French films are often portrayed far more subtly.

BY RENÉ PRÉDAL

THERE is nothing in French cinema like *Germania anno zero* (1947), in which the Italian director Roberto Rossellini portrayed the material and spiritual ruins of post-war Germany. Nor is there anything comparable to *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), the American director Lewis Milestone's film version of Erich Maria Remarque's novel about life in the German trenches of World War I. There is certainly nothing similar to *The Desert Fox* (1951), the film in which another American director, Henry Hathaway, attempted to restore the reputation of Field Marshal Rommel.

French film-makers do not find it easy to put themselves in alien shoes, especially when that alien is a German. Similarly, German roles in French films are almost always played not by French actors but by actors of Germanic origin. Whereas the English actor James Mason played Rommel in Hathaway's film, the German roles in *Les dimanches de Ville-d'Avray* (Serge Bourguignon, 1963) and *Le franciscain de Bourges* (Claude Autant-Lara, 1968) were played by Hardy Kruger. The bluff intriguing figure of Curt Jurgens became familiar as the German in countless French-made thrillers; Jess Hahn featured as a German musician who became a tramp in the Parisian summer of *Le signe du lion* (Eric Rohmer, 1959); and Gert Froebe was often cast in the role of the fat, antipathetic German.

Erich von Stroheim carved out for himself an unusual film career, playing noble, generous soldiers in *La grande illusion* (Jean Renoir, 1937) and *Macao, l'enfer du jeu* (Jean Delannoy, 1939) and civilians driven out of Germany by the nazis in films such as *Les disparus de Saint-Agil* (Christian-Jaque, 1938) and *Pièges* (Robert Siodmak, 1939).

The nazi as evil personified

French spy films made during the 1930s were often set outside a specific historical time-frame, and adversaries were generally treated with

A scene from French director Serge Bourguignon's ***Les dimanches de Ville-d'Avray*** *(1963), which describes the friendship between a former German pilot suffering from amnesia (Hardy Kruger) and a nine-year-old French girl (Patricia Gozzi).*

François Truffaut's film ***Jules et Jim*** *(1962) tells the story of two friends, an Austrian (Oskar Werner, right) and a Frenchman (Henri Serre) and their constantly shifting triangular relationship with Catherine (Jeanne Moreau).*

chivalrous respect (*Deuxième bureau,* Pierre Billon, 1935; *Les loups entre eux* and *L'homme à abattre,* Léon Mathot, 1936-1937; *Le capitaine Benoît,* Maurice de Canonge, 1939). Nazism changed this situation totally.

A shadowy figure whose presence made itself felt in deserted places and in the eyes of his victims (*Nuit et brouillard*, Alain Resnais, 1955), the nazi boss personified the horror of the concentration camp, both in the extraordinary but true odyssey of Martin Gray (*Au nom de tous les miens,* Robert Enrico, 1983) and in Armand Gatti's *L'Enclos* (1961).

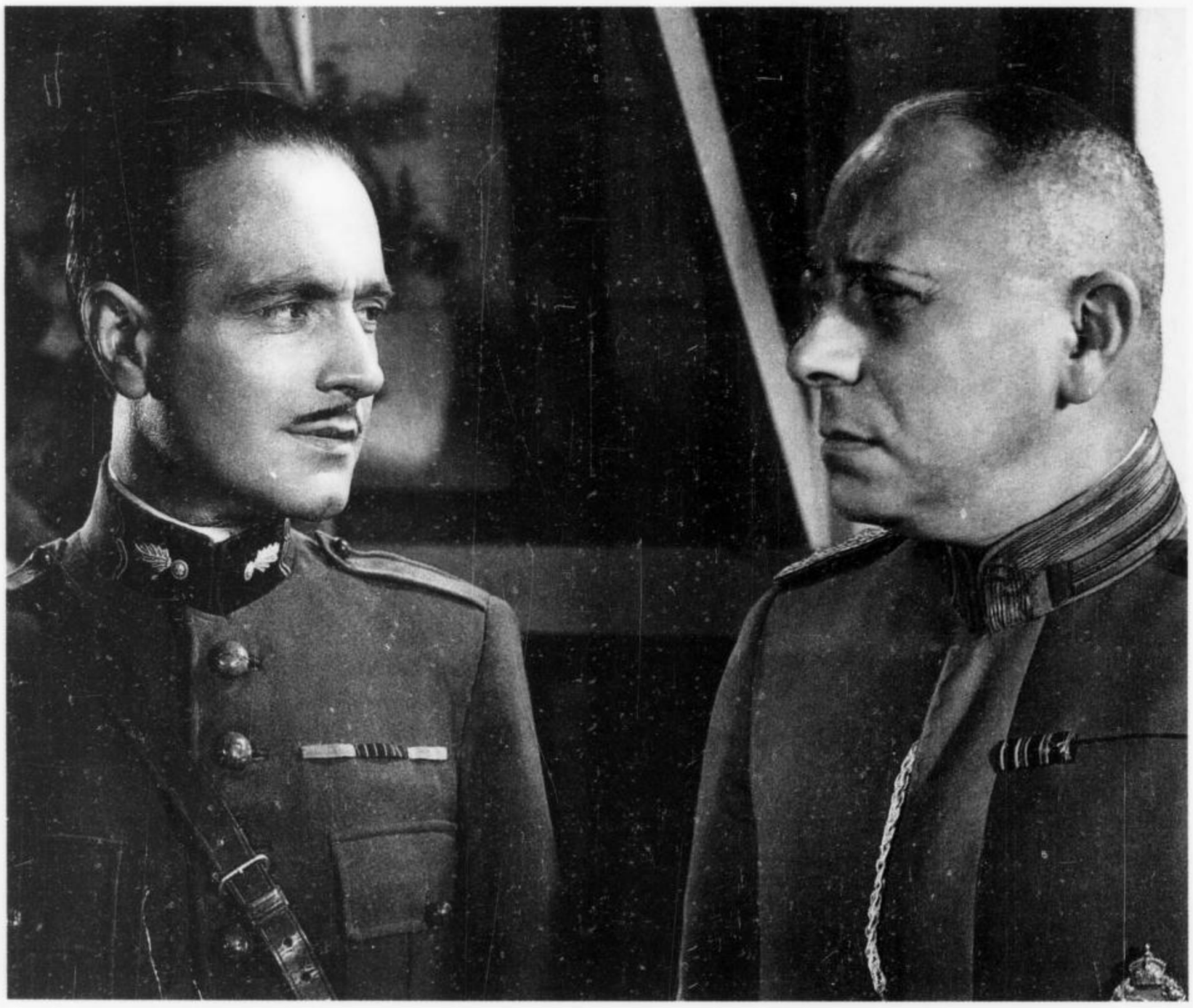
In *Le sauveur* (Michel Mardore, 1971), a German played by Horst Bucholz passes himself off as an English parachutist in order to penetrate the Resistance. He succeeds in this by seducing and then subjugating an adolescent girl whom he induces to commit betrayals, with terrible consequences. In Jacques Rouffio's *La passante du Sans-Souci* (1981), based on a novel by Joseph Kessel, the odious Von Leggaert kills during the war the father of a small boy whom he maims for life. He also orders the execution of a liberal-minded editor and his wife, who had given herself to him in an attempt to save her husband. Returning several years later as a successful industrialist, he is killed by his former victim.

In *Shoah* (1985), Claude Lanzmann questions nazis who participated in the holocaust, and Klaus Barbie is the subject of another *cinéma-vérité* inquiry in *Hôtel Terminus* (Marcel Ophuls, 1987). Twenty years earlier there had already been an evocation (this, though, was far from being "direct" cinema) of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in *La cage de verre* (Philippe Arthuys, 1965), as well as the disquieting *Authentique procès de Carl-Emmanuel Jung* (Marcel Hanoun, 1966), in which the characters and the judgement were fictitious but exemplary.

Whereas the Jewish tragedy was treated with deep respect, the story of the Wehrmacht was deliberately lampooned in a series of mediocre comedies in which French cinema practised a classic form of compensation therapy. The historical fact was that the French army had been defeated, and script-writers rehashed again and again the story of isolated individuals who, in the midst of general pandemonium, use their French resourcefulness to run rings round German stolidity. In *Papy fait de la Résistance* (Jean-Marie Poiré, 1983) a French grandpa works for the Resistance under the very nose of fat Marshal Von Apfelstrudel (Jacques Villeret); in *La vache et le prisonnier* (Henri Verneuil, 1959), a French prisoner of war, played by Fernandel, crosses Germany with a cow; in *La grande vadrouille* (Gérard Oury, 1966) Bourvil and Louis de Funès succeed in crossing the enemy lines, as do the squaddies in *Mais où est donc passée la septième compagnie?* (Robert Lamoureux, 1973).

The occupation

"Occupation" films constitute a sub-category of their own among French war films. Members of the occupying forces appear in minor roles in often interesting productions such as *Léon Morin*



The friendship between a captured French officer (Pierre Fresnay, left) and the commandant of his German prison (Erich von Stroheim) is portrayed in Jean Renoir's masterpiece ***La grande illusion*** *(1937).*

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The Gestapo raids a French school in Louis Malle's ***Au revoir les enfants*** *(1987), a film based on an episode from the director's own childhood.*

prêtre (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1961) and *Un sac de billes* (Jacques Doillon, 1976).

However, in other films about the occupation, such as *Lacombe Lucien* (Louis Malle, 1974), *Les violons du bal* (Michel Drach, 1974), *Les guichets du Louvre* (Michel Mitrani, 1973) and *Mr Klein* (Joseph Losey, 1976), "the villains are not German but French and their cruelty is less physical than verbal and indirect ... There are no nazi brutes, a decision which was less an evasion than a desire to redefine the enemy ... since the Jews of Paris lived in greater fear of being denounced by the French than of German bullets."[1]

This statement is not always supported by the evidence. In *Les honneurs de la guerre* (Jean Dewever, 1961), for reasons of military honour, a German officer refuses to withdraw without a fight at the time of the pull-back of August 1944 and causes a pointless slaughter. And in *Au revoir les enfants* (Louis Malle, 1987), the Gestapo tracks down Jewish children to send them to the death camps. Although Dewever treats the members of the Resistance hidden in the church no better than he does the German officer, Louis Malle depicts a German officer who, to please a pretty woman, sends packing a French militiaman who wants to eject a Jew from the restaurant in which they are dining.

Dissociated from their nazi leaders, the German people are often portrayed sympathetically by French film-makers. In *Le passage du Rhin* (André Cayatte, 1960) Roger, a wartime prisoner at the Kessler farm in Germany, returns there of his own accord to rediscover love and dignity.

In *Le franciscain de Bourges*, Claude Autant-Lara pays a noble tribute to the saintly friar-nurse Alfred Stanke. Edgardo Cozarinsky's *La guerre d'un seul homme* (1982) gives a picture of occupied France in which official shots from French newsreels are combined with disillusioned comments from the diaries of Ernst Jünger, a German officer in Paris--a unique example of a film in which the

1. Quotation from *L'holocauste à l'écran*, by Annette Insdorf, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1985.

leading character is a German portrayed "from inside".

In a number of iconoclastic films, Germans are even shown, despite the dramatic circumstances, involved in flirtations, as in Jean-Paul Rappenau's *La vie de château* (1965), or caught up in a Cornelian dilemma, like the German in *Le silence de la mer* (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1949, based on a novel by Vercors), who is uneasy in the role of occupier and turns away from passionate love to bury himself in solitude. The German soldier in *Hiroshima mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959, from a screenplay by Marguerite Duras) embodies youth and love, but also intolerable suffering. So often the executioner, the German here, on the contrary, is an expiatory victim of the war.

Many French films, therefore, seek out the man behind the German uniform. Even the historical inquiry in *Le chagrin et la pitié* (Marcel Ophüls, 1969) opens with the wedding in Germany of the daughter of a Wehrmacht captain who as a young man had been stationed in Clermont-Ferrand between 1942 and 1944, thus attempting to bring together the army and civilian society, past and present, without any trace of manichaeism.

This insistence on human complexity is even more evident in *The Memory of Justice* (1976), a film about the Nuremberg trials in which the director, Marcel Ophüls, son of the German filmmaker Max Ophüls and married to a German woman who was a member of the Hitler Youth organization, does not hesitate to implicate him-

Alain Delon and Juliet Berto in a scene from Joseph Losey's ***Mr Klein*** *(1976), a study on the theme of identity, indifference and the search for truth.*

Eiji Okada and Emmanuelle Riva play the lead roles in ***Hiroshima mon amour*** *(Alain Resnais, 1959).*

self directly. Nazism is thus shown in terms of its impact on everyday life and not simply as an ideological concept.

Philippe Nahoun's *Une fille unique,* which also appeared in 1976, drew a complex and rather disquieting fictional portrait. During the summer of 1935, Sophie, bored and tired of her husband, a militant communist, becomes attracted to Thomas, a young German Jew who accidentally kills a fascist. Thomas comes to exercise a strange fascination on her. To a journalist who asked why the young woman should be drawn out of her humdrum life by a man who happened to be a both a Jew and a German, Nahoun replied: "because it was horrible to be a German Jew in 1935."[2] After the black and white judgements of other films, this work examines nuances that are too often reserved for portrayals of national heroes.

In *Menaces* (1939) Erich von Stroheim played the role of a poor lodger in a small Paris hotel. This was the first in a succession of characters who projected an unexpected image of the German as vulnerable and humiliated. The story of a former pilot who returns from the war suffering from amnesia and attempts to recover a precarious happiness with a nine-year-old girl, *Les dimanches de Ville-d'Avray*, despite occasional stylistic affectations, is a sensitive film. This man, a stranger to himself, joins forces with someone else who is excluded from society in an attempt to build a better world.

Similarly, the character of the Austrian Jules, in *Jules et Jim* (François Truffaut, 1962, based on a novel by Henry-Pierre Roché), is richer and more profoundly explored than that of his French friend Jim. He is the first to be deceived by the woman that they both love, and it is he who is left when Catherine commits suicide, taking Jim to his death with her.

Unlike the German tourist of *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (Louis Malle, 1957), murdered by a young car thief who finds him unpleasant, the young geologist in *La maison des bories* (Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, 1969) is the epitome of Germanic seductiveness; Matthieu Carrière glows with sun-drenched romanticism opposite Marie Dubois as the virtuous wife of a man who does not deserve her.

On the whole, therefore, portrayals of Germans in French cinema are less stereotyped than one might have been led to believe. ■

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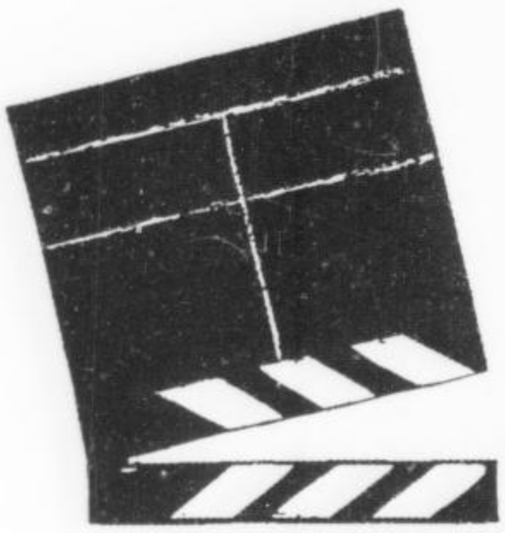
2. Philippe Nahoun in *Cinéma 76,* No. 215, November 1976.

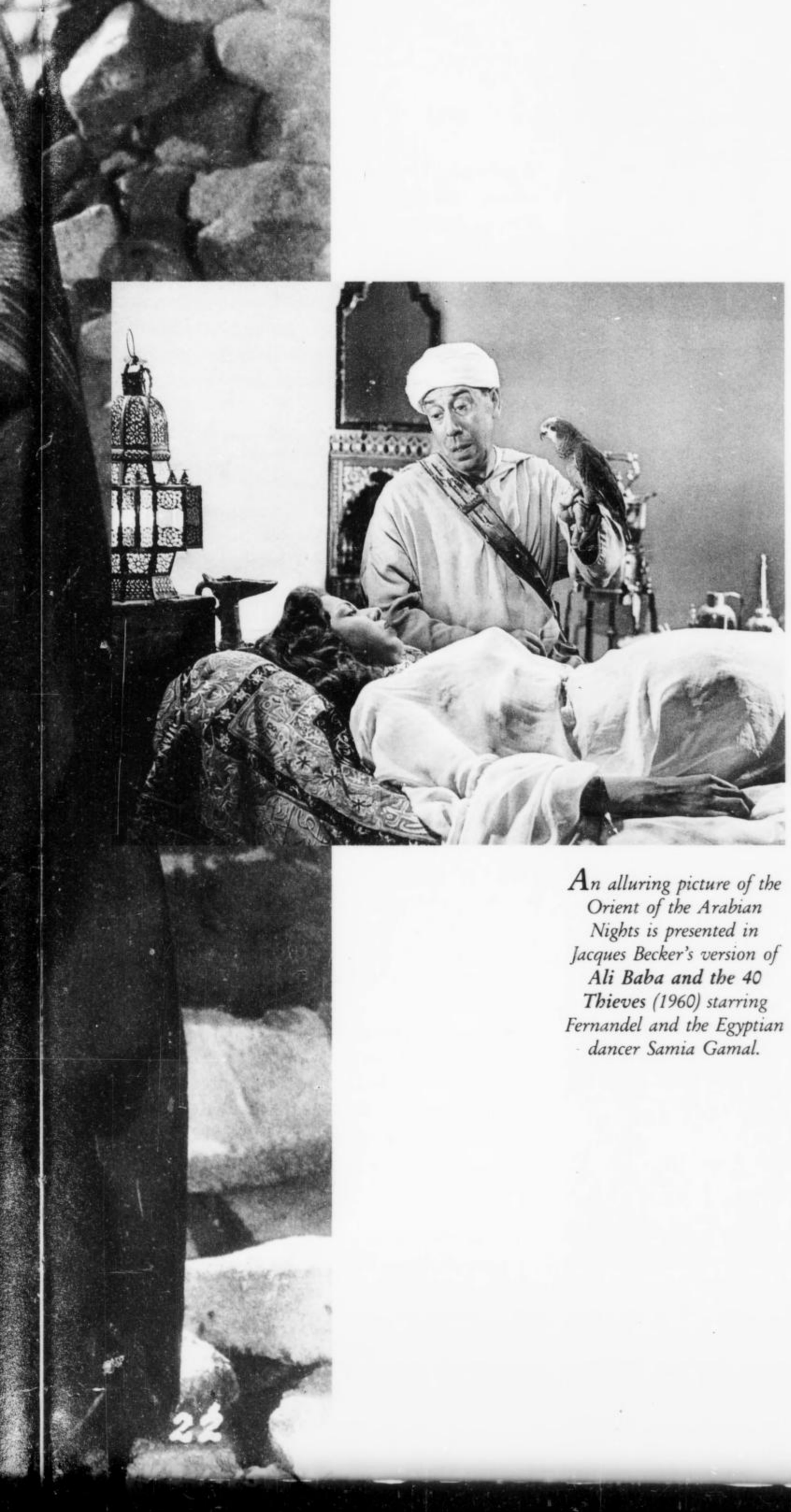


Western cinema's distorted image of the Arab as a mysterious and often shifty figure from a world of harems and palm trees has still not faded from the screen.

Rudolph Valentino, superstar of the silent screen, in ***The Son of the Sheik*** *(1926), one of the films that created the stock Hollywood image of the Arab.*

An Orient of myth and mystery

BY ABBAS FAHDEL



An alluring picture of the Orient of the Arabian Nights is presented in Jacques Becker's version of ***Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*** *(1960) starring Fernandel and the Egyptian dancer Samia Gamal.*

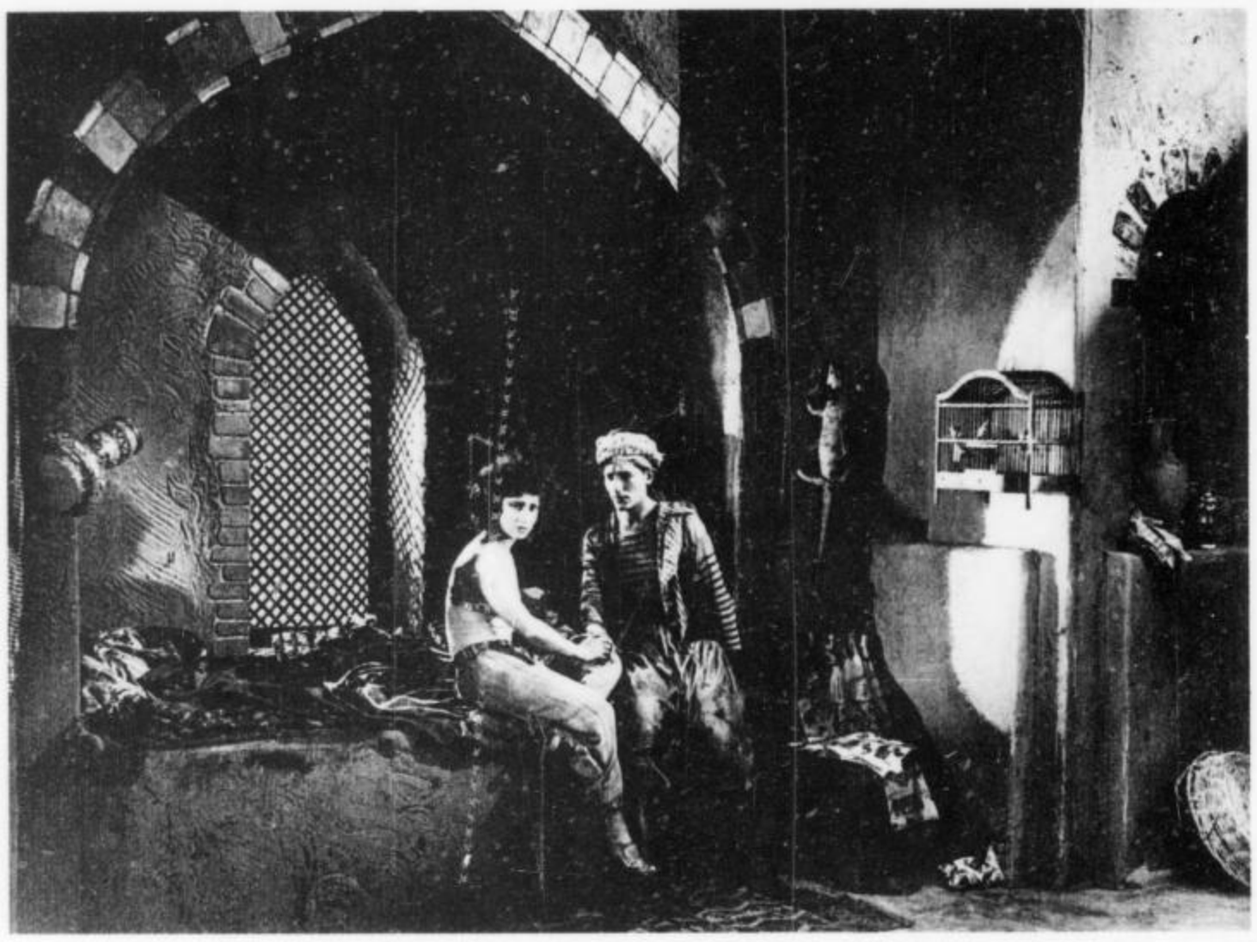
THE picture of the Arab in Western cinema is often a product of fantasy and imagination, reflecting the West's fascination with and fear of the Arab Muslim East, that other world so near and yet so far.

This colourful, mysterious and exaggerated picture, this Orient made in Hollywood, Paris, or Rome, would perhaps be less offensive if it was not peopled by rascally and barbaric Arabs, recognizable by their shifty looks and dissolute manner. They are hot-tempered and always seem on the point of whipping out a dagger. Lustful and polygamous, they like to kidnap young Western girls and sequestrate them in their harems.

In fact, Western cinema is no more than a reflection of widespread prejudices, some of them dating back to the Crusades, which were widely held under colonial rule, when, after all, North Africa was known as the Barbary Coast.

If some films such as *Morocco, Casablanca, Un de la Légion,* and *The Lost Patrol* purport to be set on Arab soil yet contrive not to show a single Arab, in others Arabs have walk-on parts and provide a splash of local colour, along with the minarets, palm trees and camels.

Even so, the range of roles played by male Arab actors is wider than that available to Arab women. A man can be a valet, a shoeshine boy, a guide, a snake charmer, a looter or even an official, whereas a woman is limited to the roles of prostitute (in a tradition stretching from *Pépé le Moko* in 1936 to *Grand frère,* which came out seven years ago) or belly-dancer *(La maison du Maltais).*



The "Moorish woman" is often depicted in films as a prostitute, top (Julien Duvivier's ***Pépé le Moko****, 1936), or as a dancer, above (****La maison du Maltais****, Henri Fescourt, 1927).*

Scantily dressed, lascivious and voluptuous, she provides entertainment for legionnaires and adventurers slumming it in disreputable casbahs. Occasionally she may display fidelity and heroism, like Yasmina, the dancer in *Fleur de sable* who dies in the arms of a European intelligence officer after helping him thwart a conspiracy.

Hitchcock's three minarets

Just as little respect is paid to the Arab landscape as to the people who live in it. Reduced to a handful of clichés—picturesque alleys, teeming markets and palm groves surrounded by sand dunes—it is no more authentic than Arab characters played by Western actors with brown-stained faces. Lack of authenticity is not confined to films made in the studio with painted scenery and plastic palm trees. In many films made on location in Arab countries the natural beauty of the surroundings is heightened with artificial splendours intended to add to the exotic effect. In *The Man Who Knew Too Much,* Alfred Hitchcock shows not just the famous single minaret of the Koutoubia Mosque, Marrakesh, but three of them! In *Pépé le Moko* the Algiers Casbah becomes a hideout for crooks and gangsters, while in other productions Beirut, Cairo, Tangiers and Casablanca are shown as capitals of vice, crime and corruption.

Film-goers should not be surprised, therefore, to hear Egyptians speaking a Tunisian dialect, or to see Iraqis dressed like Moroccans. These incongruities exist because many films set in the Middle East are actually made in the Maghreb. Some directors make no distinction between the various Arab peoples, and others mix up Arabs and Muslims, thus robbing their works of the little ethnological interest they might otherwise have had.

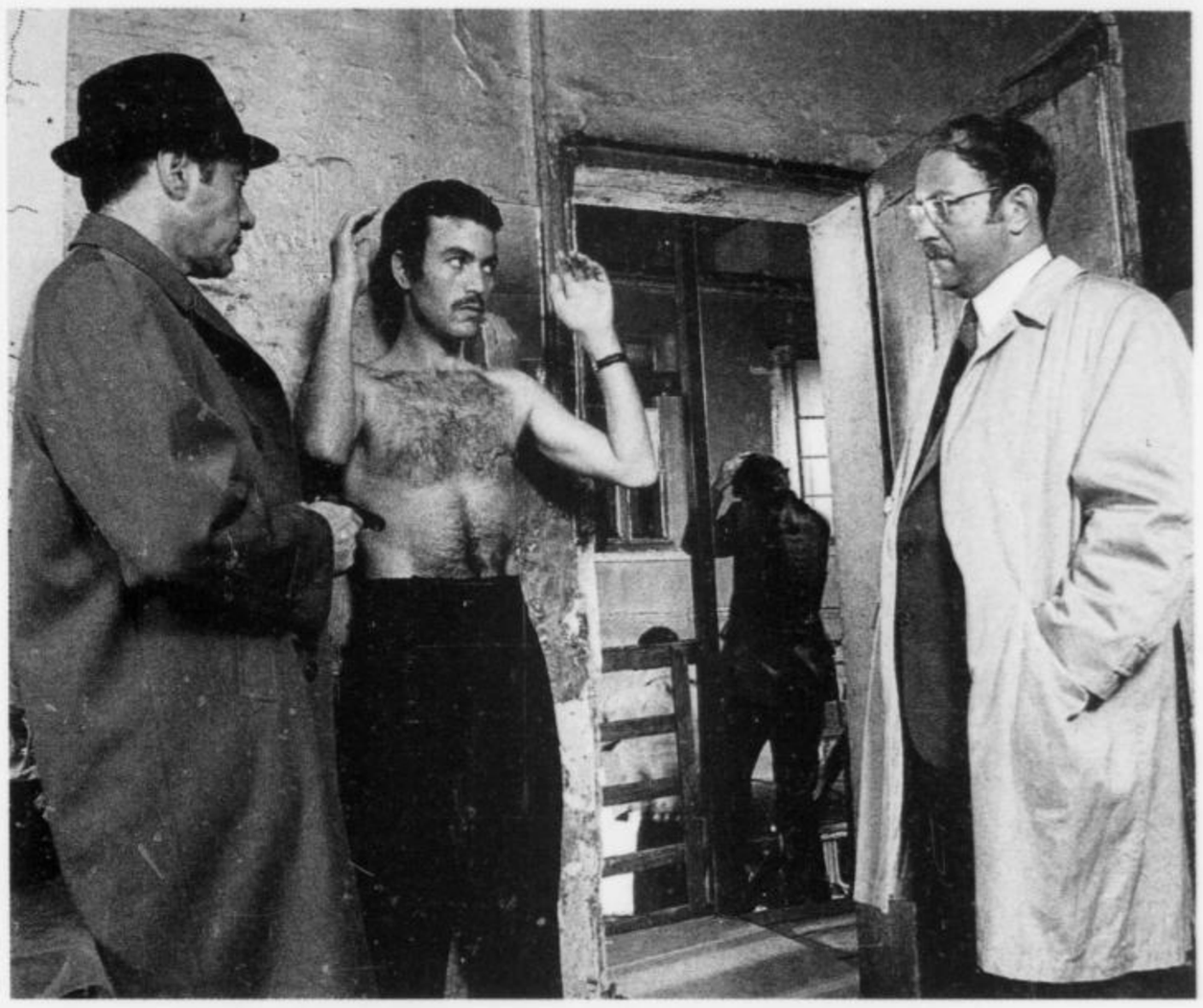
The casual way in which Western filmmakers appropriate Arab landscapes, characters and stories and reshape them as they please in a rubbishy celluloid Orient is evidence of a long-standing unscrupulousness.

The colonial film

After the end of World War I, the Arab rebellion against foreign domination became increasingly widespread. Its repercussions reached the European countries, and the cinema, which could not ignore such a burning question, also entered the fray. Thus the colonial film was born and became popular in the 1920s and 1930s. This kind of film glorifies the skills of the colonisers *(Les hommes nouveaux* and *Le bled* were made for the centenary of the French conquest of Algeria) and what were known as "peacekeeping" operations *(Feu, Les fils du soleil, Beau Geste, La voix du désert).* Its heroes are the legionnaires and soldiers of the colonial armies, and the villains are the "recalcitrant" Arabs.

Not all the natives are shown as hostile and treacherous. Sometimes, among the ranks of the local officials, we come across "good" Arabs who choose to join the colonial forces and fight against their rebellious brothers *(L'âme du bled, Capitaine Ardant).*

The police check up on Algerian immigrants in France during the Algerian war in this scene from Michel Drach's ***Elise ou la vraie vie*** *(1971).*



On the other hand, Arab revolts, particularly the most dramatic one in Algeria, are handled with a great deal of embarrassment. In the 1960s and 1970s, a few films such as *Elise ou la vraie vie, Muriel,* and *Le petit soldat,* depicted the Algerian war summarily and indirectly, but only one French film squarely faced up to the subject, the American director James Blue's *Les oliviers de la justice,* and that was an anachronism since it called for reconciliation when the breaking point had already been reached.

It was not until the 1970s that two French film-makers, René Vautier and Yves Boisset, courageously denounced the colonial war in *Avoir vingt ans dans les Aurès* and *R.A.S.,* stories of young conscripts forced to take part in "mopping-up" operations in Algeria. In 1989, the director Gérard Mordillat dealt with a similar subject in *Cher frangin.*

The French output is not very substantial in comparison to the many American films on the Viet Nam war. The only Western director to show the war from the Algerian point of view was the Italian Gillo Pontecorvo, whose courageous *The Battle of Algiers* was long banned in France.

The Arab-Israeli conflict

It seemed that the end of the colonial era and the independence of the Arab countries might herald the opening of a new chapter of less contentious relations between East and West. But the old demons were awakened by the Arab-Israeli conflict. Some Western directors took sides in their treatment of this conflict. In Otto Preminger's *Exodus,* which retraces the creation of Israel, all the Arabs are unpleasant characters, except for one who wants to get along with the Jewish colonists and is assassinated by his co-religionists.

Preminger's 1974 film *Rosebud* deals with the Palestinian question from the terrorist angle. Other American films such as *Victory at Entebbe* and *The Little Drummer Girl* reflect a similar approach, while the problems of occupation were raised by the politically-minded film-maker Costa-Gavras in *Hanna K.*

Scene from ***The Battle of Algiers*** *(1970), Gillo Pontecorvo's courageous film about the Algerian war (1954-1962).*

In other films, antagonism between East and West takes the form of doomed romances between Arabs and Westerners. From *Fazil,* the story of a Frenchwoman who falls in love with an Arab prince and eventually escapes from the harem where she has been confined (and where a muezzin calls the faithful to prayer by singing "Oh my love"!), to *Pierre et Djemila,* a modern version of the Romeo and Juliet story transposed to a suburban low-rent housing estate (where native-born French people and North African immigrants live side by side without mixing), these films usually end with the death of one of the protagonists, if not both. Rare exceptions, such as *Baroud* and Rex Ingram's *The Arab,* have happier endings.

Certain films, inspired by actual events and real people, rise above this allegedly insurmountable antagonism and evoke the experience of a few fervent lovers of the East who have gone in search of the Arab Muslim world. Such productions include *L'appel du silence,* which tells the story of Charles de Foucauld, a French viscount who became a desert hermit, and above all *Lawrence of Arabia,* which had a worldwide success. But even in these films, the facts were often sacrificed to the demands of a fictional treatment.

The East of a Thousand and One Nights

Another kind of film about the East is based on stories and legends such as the celebrated *Thousand and One Nights.* These tales that paint the splendour and refinement of the golden age of Arab Muslim civilization in glowing colours provide an inexhaustible treasury of wonderful material which has been adapted for the cinema with varying degrees of success.

The first screen adaptation of the adventures of Aladdin appeared as early as 1899. In 1902, it was the turn of Ali Baba, and in 1919 that of Sindbad the Sailor. They were followed by several hundred more films from the West, including four masterpieces: the two versions of *The Thief of Baghdad* (USA, 1924 and UK, 1940), *Ali Baba et les 40 voleurs* (a comedy starring the French actor Fernandel and the delightful Egyptian dancer Samia Gamal), and the Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Il fiore delle mille e una notte.* Pasolini was the only film-maker to show as much interest in the fantastic and aesthetic aspects of the tales as the profound wisdom contained in them.

These films often provide pleasant entertainment, but curiously enough their success has had the deleterious effect of encouraging many Western directors to depict an imaginary East instead of the real thing. The problem is that some of these "imaginative" films misleadingly claim to give an accurate picture of Arab life. One of them, Arthur Joffe's extraordinary *Harem,* depicts a fantasy Orient which no Arab would recognize.

David Lean directs Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif (inset in close-up) during the filming of ***Lawrence of Arabia*** *in 1962.*

Recently the cinema has begun to examine the problems of immigration. Some films about immigrant communities facing an uphill struggle to win acceptance popularize widespread clichés such as that of the delinquent Arab. Others, such as Yves Boisset's *Dupont-La-Joie* and Roger Hanin's *Train d'enfer* are warm-hearted films which nevertheless confine the immigrant in the role of victim and scapegoat. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Angst essen Seele auf (Fear Eats the Soul)* and Michel Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* are two of several exceptional films which offer a critique of racism while at the same time presenting complex and subtle portraits of attractive characters.

The last few years have seen the emergence of a new generation of immigrants' children who find it easier than their parents to integrate. Among them are a number of film-makers including Mehdi Charef, Rachid Bouchareb and Abdelkarim Bahloul, who have already had some success in presenting a more complex, subtle and accurate picture of the Arab community. ■

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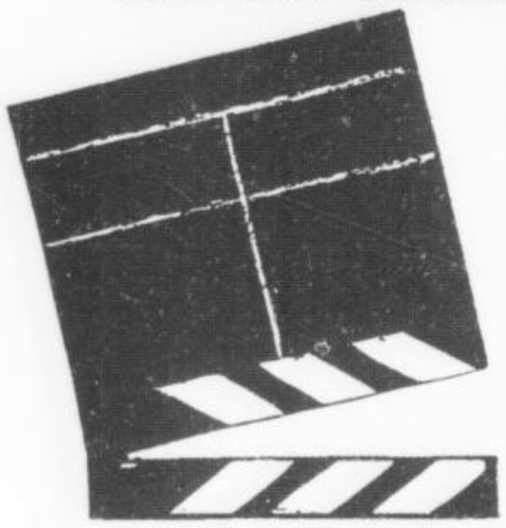
of Iraq, is a journalist with the Paris periodical *Présence du Cinéma Français*. He has directed several short films and has contributed to a number of books on cinema and television, including *Les cinémas arabes* (Paris, 1986) and *Les télévisions du monde* (Paris, 1988).

Tristan and Pavlova through the looking glass



Co-operation, not caricature, is the new watchword in relations between American and Soviet cinema.

BY MARILYNE FELLOUS

TRISTAN, a male American dolphin, and Pavlova, a female Soviet dolphin, are trained for combat at military bases in their respective countries. Then, one day, they meet under water and fall in love...

This is the plot of a recent animated cartoon series co-produced by a Soviet studio and an American company. Only a few years ago, collaboration between the United States and the Soviet Union on a theme relating to military confrontation would have been inconceivable. For Americans, the Russian represented the threat of communist subversion. The Soviet image of the American was fuzzier. The West epitomized all that was alien, but historically its image had varied from that of the despised adversary to that of the fascinating model.

In 1908, when Russian cinema was born, the West already led the field. To conquer the market, Russian companies had to woo the public with films which were as attractive as American action films or French comedies of manners. As early as 1912, in addition to historical dramas and adaptations of great works of Russian literature, many films were made about fashionable society, directly inspired by the Western films the Russian public loved so much. With few exceptions, such as Yakov Protazanov's *Jenny the Servant* (1917), these stories reflected a taste for melodrama and tragic endings.

The 1917 revolution and foreign intervention brought an increasingly strong ideological colouring to the rivalry between Russian and Western cinema. The Western countries were no longer taken as models but as examples of a depravity which had to be denounced. In Soviet cinema, America, the symbol of capitalism, became the rival and the enemy.

Lev Kuleshov's evocatively titled *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924) strikingly reflects the spirit of the 1920s. A number of enduring stereotypes were created in this odd parody of an American action film. The characters are one-dimensional representations of the social class to which they belong. West, the cowboy, is the archetypal spoiled child. A rich land-owner consumed with fear and hatred of the Bolsheviks, he sets off for the Soviet Union with his assistant and bodyguard, Dejddy. The latter, as a representative of the working classes and thus a more attractive figure, soon finds his way around in a world very different from his own. Meanwhile, Jenny, the secretary, has plenty of time to get to know and like the Soviet Union.

However, while they seemed to be denouncing the anti-Soviet campaigns which raged in the United States, the authors of this kind of film did not take the stereotypes they used too seriously.

In the 1930s, the class struggle and great power rivalry intensified, but the trend for remakes continued unabated. In his memoirs the Soviet film-maker Mikhail Romm wrote this account of the origins of his film *The Thirteen:*

"I was sent for by the Head of Cinematography, Boris Shumyatsky. The script-writer Iossif Prut was summoned at the same time. Neither of us knew what for.

" 'A comrade—his name is immaterial—has seen an American film in which a desert patrol perishes in a combat after carrying out its mission,' Shumyatsky said.* 'The film is imperialist and hysterical, but this comrade has suggested that something similar should be made about our frontier guards. Will you try? You can write the scenario together.'

" 'Can we see the film?'

" 'No, it's already been sent back. But that doesn't matter. The important thing is that we need a desert (we've got some terrific ones), frontier guards and Basmachis, and that everyone dies at the end. Almost everyone, but not everyone, don't forget that, comrade Mikhail!' "

In other words, in order to depict the struggle

* John Ford's *The Lost Patrol* (1934).

Lev Kuleshov's ***The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*** *(1924) used stereotyped characters to parody American comedy films of the 1920s.*

against the ideological enemy within, Soviet cinema fell back on ideas from the ideological enemy outside its frontiers.

In 1953, in the middle of the Cold War, Abram Room was commissioned to make a film called *Silver Dust*, in which a corrupt American scientist discovers a method of mass destruction. He wants to experiment with it on Blacks, but is prevented by "representatives of the people, peace campaigners, one of whom is his eldest son". Finally he sells his discovery at an exorbitant price to gangsters who murder him. His younger son, a fascist, dies from the effects of the terrible silver dust. All the ingredients are there: corruption by money, the neo-nazi danger, and the people's struggle for progress and peace.

Ideological struggles

First and foremost, this type of film was a denunciation of the ideological poison of nazism and neo-nazism. In *Off Season* (1968), which was patterned on an American spy thriller based on a true story, a Soviet spy in "a Western country" is ordered to neutralize a mad scientist who is nostalgic about nazism. The spy is here the saviour of humanity, a role which each country simultaneously and in competition claims for itself.

In the field of the "ideological struggle", the films of the Brezhnev period satisfied two demands. They responded to anti-Soviet films produced in the United States by using a similar genre and themes, but above all they illustrated official policy, which was to seek an agreement to halt the arms race. Thus the films proclaim the Soviet desire for peace and at the same time the absurdity of war, even explaining the tensions between the two great powers in terms of the folly of certain individuals.

Sergei Mikaelian's *Flight 222*, in which a Soviet dancer refuses to return home from a tour

in the United States, is an example of a duplicated film. The American intelligence services put pressure on his wife so that she stays too. This is a response to the American film *White Nights*, in which the dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, an émigré to the United States, plays himself. A. Tumanishvili's *Solitary Navigation* is an example of an anti-war protest film in which a Soviet ship manages to avoid a world catastrophe planned by the commander of an American atomic submarine who goes mad during the Viet Nam war.

The rejection of the West appears in another form, less official but just as durable, in the conflict between Slavophiles and Westernizers. This issue, which divided the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, re-emerged with the religious revival in the middle of the 1960s, of which the flagship film was Andrei Tarkovski's *Andrei Rublev* (1966). The epitome of triumphant technology and the renunciation of spiritual values, the West hurtles inexorably towards an apocalypse from which Russia alone can save it. Konstantin Lopushanski's *Letters from a Dead Man* (1986) gives a detailed description of a nuclear catastrophe which takes place outside the Soviet Union.

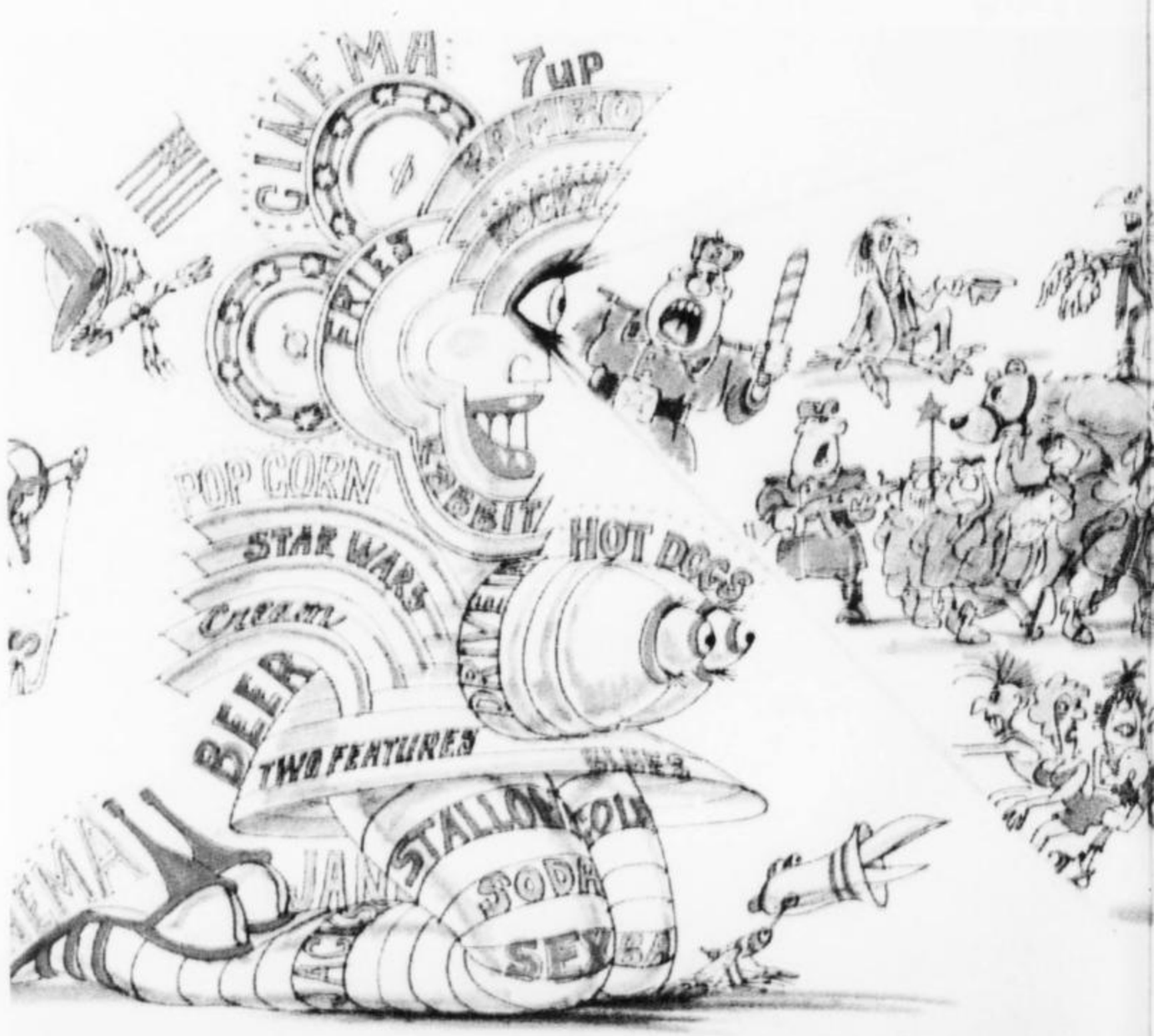
'Eternal Russia'

The West is interesting to these film-makers above all as a way of asking what lies beyond the familiar world. Whether the subject is a visit to another country (in Alov and Naoumov's *The Shore* a writer visits a decadent Federal Republic of Germany), or voluntary or involuntary emigration (in Naoumov's *The Choice* two old friends meet again, one of whom escaped during the Second World War and now realizes that he is a failure because he left his homeland; Tarkovski's *Nostalgia*, made in Italy in 1983, evokes its author's exile)—all these films show how hard it is for Russians to live far from their native soil and how they cannot adapt to a savage, hostile world which they consider to be on the verge of bankruptcy.

But this tendency to fall back on the values of an "eternal Russia" is matched by another which, by authorizing and even encouraging co-productions with other countries, establishes the West as a friendlier place, offering a welcome to Russian émigrés who bear with them the values of a past which their country is at last beginning to rehabilitate.

Here too, an animated cartoon sets the tone. A US-USSR co-production directed by Efim Gambourg, its title is *Stereotypes*. Constructed in the form of a parody of an American show, it portrays bearded and threatening mujiks armed with hammers and sickles and cynical cigar-smoking businessmen, their feet on the table. ■

The Soviet director Mikhail Romm's film ***The Thirteen*** *(1936), above, is thought to have been inspired by John Ford's* ***The Lost Patrol*** *(1934), below.*

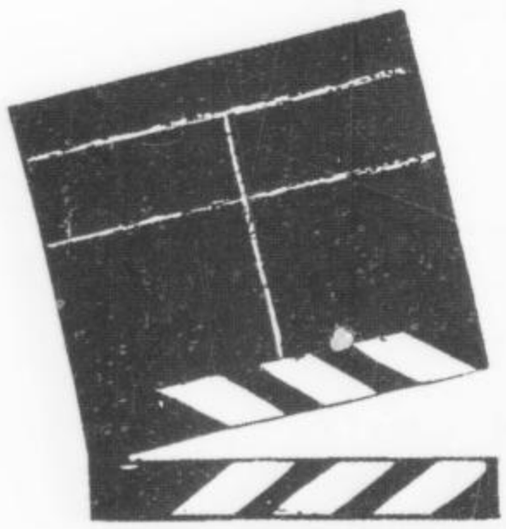


MARILYNE FELLOUS, of France, an expert on Soviet cinema, is Paris correspondent of the specialist journals *Sovestski Ekran* (Moscow) and *L'art soviétique* (Tbilisi). She is one of the authors of a book entitled *Film totem, film tabou* (Le Parc, Liège, 1989), and is currently preparing a doctoral thesis on the cinema and society in the Soviet Union.

Nostalgia, *filmed in Italy in 1983 by Andrei Tarkovski, evokes the homesickness of Russians living far from their native soil.*

Preliminary sketches for the animated cartoon* Stereotypes *(1988), a Soviet-American co-production directed by Efim Gambourg.

BY ASSIA DJEBAR



An Algerian film-maker and writer reflects on the image and self-image of people in Third World societies and especially on women's new perceptions of the world.

ONE night in December 1976, in a farm rented from some peasant farmers 70 kilometres from Algiers, with a team of seventeen technicians and two actors, I was shooting an interior night scene—a man looking at his sleeping wife.

Nothing very special about that! Nothing special about the action... except for the duration of the look (a minute and a half), or rather of the double look—myself, the technicians, and later the film audience, looking at the man, the Other, looking at an Algerian woman lying heedlessly asleep, like a Venus in an Italian Renaissance painting. It was as if all art (at that time Arab cinema could, objectively, be said to be at a stage of development similar to that of Florentine or Venetian painting of the Quattrocento) had to begin by going through this first discovery of how another person—the Other—looks at a woman in an unguarded moment and how, in turn, we look at him looking at her.

In the film, *La nouba des femmes du mont Chenoua,* the woman is lying on the marital bed, her hair bound up in a red scarf; only the pure lines of her face are visible. I had worked out the décor down to the last detail—the silky glimmer of the bedclothes and the pillows contrasting with the rough whitewashed walls, the carpets on the floor, and wool, lots of wool all around. Enveloped in the wide bed, the sleeping woman seems passive, serene. Then, from her few disordered movements, we gradually sense the beginnings of a struggle against a nightmare—the memories, as we will later learn, of a wartime past.

Stolen glances

What of the onlooker, the man motionless in the doorway of the bedroom looking at his wife? Will he join her on the bed? No. Though there is desire in his look (is not the explicit or implicit impulse of desire an essential ingredient of true cinema?), it is not observed with sufficient insistence to suggest shared pleasure, the promise of intimate union.

The Other's way of looking at the desirable woman, a look on which we too are spying, is not the look of a voyeur. Slowly and with increasing intensity (a minute and a half can be a very long time), he is, despite himself, contemplating his impotence and the pain of separation. It is a look which faces up to and makes more distinct the dividing line between a couple, between the sexes.

I should, perhaps, have indicated earlier that the man is immobilized in a wheelchair which he has propelled along the wall to the open door. Even at a distance, the woman fascinates him. His hand grips the door-frame. Behind the camera, I capture the movement of the seated man as he struggles to rise, inch by inch, his face in profile twisted by the effort, and in the background the bed, the sleeping woman with the red kerchief—two masks, one so near, the other so distant.

Long after, I began to wonder if it was really just by chance that I had decided to shoot this interior night scene. At the time I had sought only the pleasure of composition, as much in the manner of a painter as of a film director. Had

Behind the veil

Women on both sides of the camera

I not chosen the scene in spite of myself? After all, for me as a writer, as a film-maker, or simply as an Arab woman, was not the real problem the painful search for an answer to the question as to the nature of the Other's look at woman, in a culture in which, for centuries, the eye had been closely guarded? One eye only existed, the eye of the master of the harem who forbade all visual imagery and invoked religious taboos to reinforce this dominance. The look of the Other, unless it is the look of a voyeur (an aggressive, invasive look), perceives nothing but the image of the woman, a mirage enshrouded in poetry and melancholy.

By looks possessed

This whole question of what it means to be scrutinized by others is a paramount concern of Arab cinema today. Yet I feel it is relevant to go beyond the personal experience I have described above, and to speak of the placing, in the not too

Photos taken during the filming of ***La nouba des femmes du mont Chenoua****. Left, the director, Assia Djebar, with one of the actors. Above, Algerian village women who appeared in the film.*

distant past, of entire societies under the microscope of the alien eye of the colonizer. Arab, African and Eastern cultures were all thus checked, recorded and "illustrated" by the scrutiny of the dominator.

This other eye was that of the Western artist (the painter of battle scenes, then the orientalist painter of fantasies, of caravans, bedouins, dancers, children begging against a background of sand dunes and ruined mosques), and then of the traveller-photographer of the years between 1880 and 1900, when the great colonial empires were at the height of their power. This period saw a profusion of postcards, which were despatched in their thousands—pictures of beautiful, more or less scantily clad "fatimas" across which, or on the back of which, tourists, soldiers and short-stay residents inscribed their messages with apparent indifference.

Thus, for about a century and a half, as in the days of pagan magic, people were "possessed"—both in the sense of being dominated and of being tricked—by the annexation of their image in an operation in which they took no part. People communicated with each other on pictures of Arabs or Blacks who themselves were excluded from communication. Did they really look at the persons represented? No. Their images, and their apparent difference, became a pretext for the circulation of ideas, words and banalities without their being even symbolically involved. The innermost identity of the persons thus observed was even more totally rejected. It was as if their difference were no more than a matter of fashion, of folklore, a mere décor. For decades, a whole genre of "colonial cinema" flourished, ranging from documentary to fiction films; once successful, it has today completely disappeared. It was as though, everywhere at that time, blind cameramen were filming mirages.

The look unveiled

And then, suddenly, women began to open their eyes and look around them. Women who until then had no right to look, who walked with lowered eyes, their faces, their foreheads, their entire bodies enveloped except for a tiny orifice left so that they could see a few paces ahead. At last they had a right to the world outside, to schooling, to study, to space. They forgot themselves so far as to contemplate the sky, trees, nature, foam on the waves, to observe the city streets and crowds, to look at others—other women, all humanity.

I venture to return to my own modest experience of scrutinizing intensively over a period

of time, because, for me, the strength of the cinema lies in its scrupulous, meticulous examination of ways of looking, in its way of looking at those who cannot look and of encountering those, whether men or women, who look for the first time.

Let us, therefore, go back to the first scene of *La nouba des femmes du mont Chenoua.* A woman is standing with her back to the audience; all that can be seen of her is her hair and the outline of her head against a wall. She rubs her forehead against the stone wall; perhaps, through impatience or helplessness, she has just banged her head against it. Any explanation is possible, since she refuses to let us see her, rejects me, rejects the camera's scrutiny. Yet this is how I chose to show her.

She walks on, searching, persisting in her rejection of the audience. Suddenly her voice breaks out, and with it all her inner feeling of revolt:

"I speak, I speak, I speak!" Then silence. "I don't want anybody to see me," she says.

And then she adds, and we understand that the man is also there in the room, waiting:

"I don't want *you* to see me."

Thus, the heroine of the film, who will live out her life before us in the next two hours, begins by proclaiming her refusal to be looked at. Then she turns and faces us, because, above all, she wants to speak, to communicate. Perhaps she is unaware that it is difficult to speak out in front of others, or that to speak into the void and into the silence is even more difficult. Yet her desire to express herself is manifest: "I speak, I speak, I speak!"

In other words the screen might be no more than a ribbon of darkness, a non-image pierced from time to time by the distant profile of a woman to remind us that the woman is there; only her voice occupies time-space, to become a real presence—a word preceded by her shadow.

My conclusion is that films made by women—from the Third World as well as from the Old World—are an expression of a desire to speak. It is as though film-making means for women a new mobility of voice and body, of a body unobserved and therefore unsubordinated, with a rediscovered autonomy and innocence. As a result, the voice takes wings and dances. At last the outsider is seeing with her own eyes.

Looks exchanged

In *La nouba des femmes du mont Chenoua,* the young woman architect who returns to the land of her childhood does indeed begin to speak, and she goes out too, rediscovering old haunts. As she wanders her eyes seek out places, houses, rivers, even those that have run dry, and forests, even those that have been burnt down. She meets other women who look at her in their turn. And through this exchange of looks, often slow, sometimes furtive, or simply blank, with the blankness of waiting, dialogues are opened—concerning the present and the past. And all around, these women among women are accompanied by the pervasive presence of scores of idle, noisy, laughing children and their uncertain bursts of song.

As I follow the heroine, I look at the other women. Or rather, I watch her, a young independent woman, savouring her rebirth. I watch her discovering the other women. As she looks at the peasant women her look opens the flood-gates of speech, until then firmly closed—women's talk about the banalities of daily life and about the still vivid past, about the embers of memories still painful despite the balm of forgetfuless. "How can I weep, when I have no tears left?", exclaims an old peasant woman, with a dried up face but a proud bearing.

A woman looks at other women. And in that look desire plays no part. The barren gap between

Maure, phot., Biskra 149 — Biskra — Ouleds Naïls

Postcards of the colonial period showed "beautiful, more or less scantily clad 'fatimas' ... on the back of which tourists inscribed messages with apparent indifference".

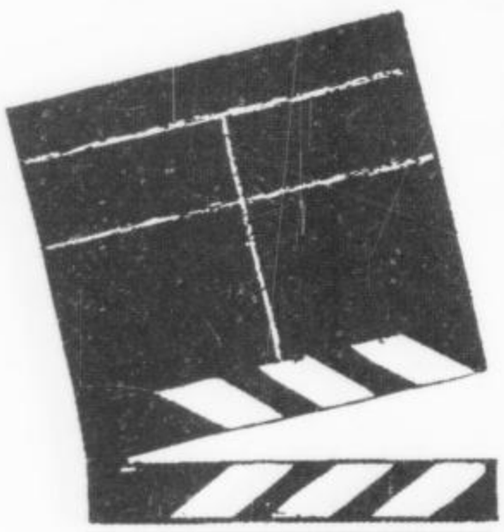
human beings disappears, conversations interweave. Returning home as dusk falls, the young woman is enveloped in the warmth of those who have spoken to her. It is as if the voice always preceded the body and the eyes and thus, far from the rapine of voyeurism, in these half-blind fumblings were to be found love, tenderness and recognition.

Can it be simply by chance that most films created by women give as much importance to sound, to music, to the timbre of voices recorded or captured unawares, as they do to the image itself? It is as though the screen had to be approached cautiously and be peopled, if need be, with images seen through a look, even a short-sighted, hazy look, but borne on a full, commanding voice, hard as stone but fragile and rich as the human heart. ■

ASSIA DJEBAR,
Algerian writer and film-maker, is the author of many short stories and novels which have been widely translated. Her first film, *La nouba des femmes du mont Chenoua* (1976-1977) won the International Critics' Prize at the Venice Biennale in 1979.

Charlie Chaplin, stranger and brother

BY MARCEL OMS



How Charles Chaplin created his "little tramp", the outsider who lurks inside all of us.

CHARLIE Chaplin, who was born a hundred years ago this year, was one of the world's best-loved public figures, greeted by cheering crowds wherever he went. Yet he also attracted suspicion, dislike and even hatred.

There is a disturbing contradiction in these two extreme responses, neither of which can be said to be totally undeserved or totally justified. Perhaps it is the fate of brilliant clowns to embody both the white-faced clown and his stooge, the auguste, and, when they abandon their motley, to attract both love and hatred according to the temper of the times, as if they were trying to reveal themselves, and us, as complete human beings.

This kind of fundamental misunderstanding came to a head in 1927, when Chaplin, attacked by the gutter press and a wide sector of public opinion, was defended from the fury of his critics by the surrealists in a tract entitled *Hands off Love*. This text, probably written mainly by Louis Aragon, contains some admirable expressions of faith in the Chaplin myth: "Obedient to the dictates of love, he has always been obedient to the dictates of love, that is what his life and all his films unanimously proclaim." And the text concludes: "Suddenly we understand the place of genius in this world. It takes possession of a man, makes him an intelligible symbol and the prey of real brutes. Genius tells the world the moral truth which universal folly obscures and tries to suppress. So thank the man who, on the vast screen of the West, over there on the horizon where the suns are setting one by one, today projects your shadows, great human truths, perhaps unique moral truths, which are worth more than all the Earth."

That same year, 1927, Chaplin made *The Circus*. In this film featuring clowns, an equestrienne, wild beasts, a conjuror and an acrobat, he revealed his debt to the traditions of the sawdust ring and paid tribute to the set pieces, classic acts and conventions of the circus. A tramp on the run from the police, Charlie takes refuge in the big top, disrupts the show, unwittingly puts on a star performance in the ring, and enters the magic circle of the circus.

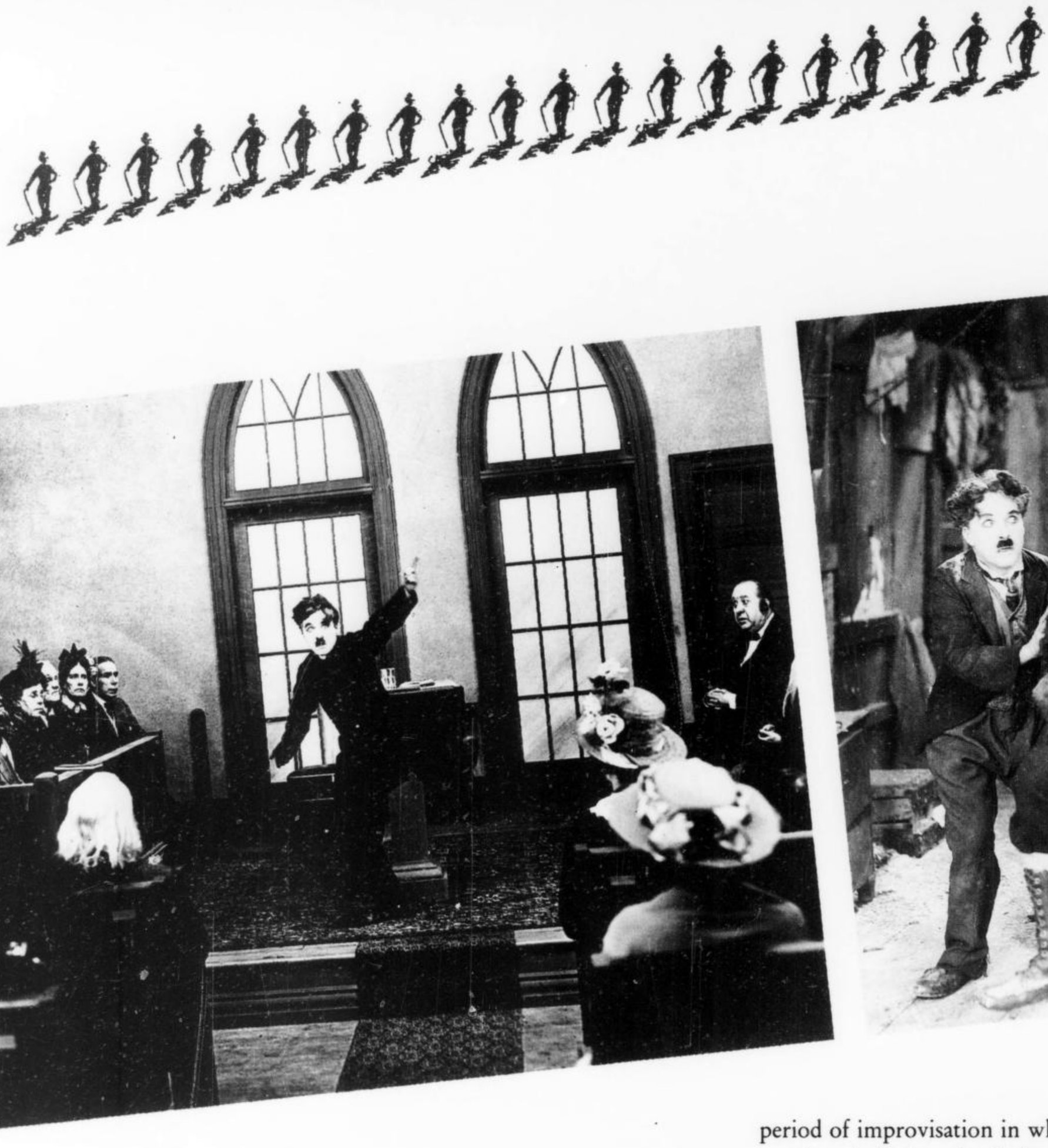
The Circus puts the Chaplin problem in a nutshell. The hero tries to escape his fate and is trapped inside the show that makes his name. Then when he wants to escape from the show, which is alienating him, he has to knuckle under. This skilful dialectic of rejection and attraction encapsulates the Chaplin tramp character. Although seemingly the most ordinary of men, he is actually an outsider. He is a rejected outcast, a wanderer desperate for affection, a tramp destined to beg forever.

The public were loyal to Chaplin partly because they recognized him for what he was and identified with him and partly because they felt the revulsion we feel for a side of ourselves that we cannot accept. The surrealists who held out a friendly hand to Chaplin the victim later strongly condemned his "sentimentalism". Luis Buñuel reproached him for allowing himself to be "crippled by the intellectuals of the whole world" and for "trying to make us weep with hoary sentimental commonplaces".

***The Kid** (1921)*
Charlie the guardian of an abandoned child.

Born a hundred years ago

A master of modern comedy



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

***The Pilgrim** (1923)*
The escaped convict disguised as a clergyman preaches his first sermon.

***The Gold Rush** (1925)*
Prospecting for gold in Alaska, Charlie takes refuge from a snowstorm in the cabin of outlaw Black Larson (right). Also driven into the cabin is Big Jim Mackay (centre) a prospector who has found gold.

***The Circus** (1927)*
Charlie's accidents in the ring make a hit with the audience.

Such passions, contradictions and inconsistencies reveal the strength of the feelings which Chaplin has aroused.

The 'little fellow'

Charles Chaplin first visited the United States in 1911 with Fred Karno's music-hall troupe. He returned the following year and stayed on to appear in vaudeville routines whose growing success owed much to the traditions of English music hall. He soon established a reputation with a number of classic sketches which he later adapted for the cinema. Two of them, *A Night in a London Club* and *An Evening in an English Music Hall,* were built around the character of a fractious drunk and could be constantly varied depending on the reactions of the audience.

When he started out in films in 1914 Chaplin played bit parts. The screen character for which he is remembered did not yet exist. He was feeling his way, trying to find his style. After a long period of improvisation in which he played aggressive, vindictive roles, he became a kind of bad-tempered Harlequin kitted out in the ragged clothes he remembered from his London days: "I ended up by thinking of those Englishmen whom I had so often seen, with their little black moustaches, their bamboo canes, their ill-fitting jackets. I decided to model myself on them."

Chaplin's famous duck-footed gait owed something to Little Tich, an English music-hall clown with huge, floppy feet, to a drunken old ostler Chaplin had seen staggering around Lambeth when he was a child, and to other comedians from Karno's troupe such as Walter Groves and Fred Kitchen.

Whatever inspired it, this faltering and uncertain appearance created the image of the solitary tramp which Chaplin never changed, even when, or especially when, the character grew in humanity, subtlety and range of emotion. "Man, intoxicated with intelligence, dancing on the peaks of despair", as the critic Elie Faure said of Chaplin in 1922, immortalizing this initiation into endless vagabondage: "Each of his feet, so

painful and so burlesque, is one of the two poles of the spirit. One is called knowledge, the other desire. By leaping from one to the other he seeks that centre of gravity of the soul that we no sooner find than we immediately lose again."

Chaplin's quest never ended, even if its course sometimes disconcerted his warmest admirers. Haunted by the spectres of a mentally unstable mother and an alcoholic father who had once stared at him without recognition in the street, he channelled into his creation all the love which had been denied him in his childhood.

Charlie the stranger

As well as performing in the melodrama that he used as the mainspring of his dialogue with the public, Chaplin was always an active and militant witness of his times, starting with his early campaigns in support of American intervention on the side of the Allies in World War I. *The Bond*, a not very convincing propaganda short, and the masterpiece *Shoulder Arms*, both made in 1918, were his contribution to the mobilization effort, but above all they were a denunciation of the folly of war.

In these films Chaplin refined the character whose mere appearance was a challenge to the established order. He became increasingly a "stranger" in the sense that Albert Camus gave to the word in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942): "Strangeness creeps in: perceiving that the world is 'dense', sensing to what degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. ... Men, too, secrete the inhuman. At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their gestures, their meaningless pantomime, make silly everything that surrounds them."

Charlie has only to appear at a spa where he is taking a cure, drunk from the first scene, and a whole world of hidden vices, shameless gossip

MARCEL OMS,
French educator and historian of the cinema, is the author of several published works, including a recent study on the French director Alain Resnais (1988).

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

***Modern Times** (1936)*
Charlie is caught up in the machine age.

***The Great Dictator** (1940)*
"Had I known of the actual horrors of the concentration camps, I could not have made ***The Great Dictator****. I could not have made fun of the homicidal insanity of the nazis."*

***Limelight** (1952)*
The aging and despondent music-hall artist Calvero, who had once been a great star.

and puritanical preaching is shattered *(The Cure,* 1917); an escaped convict, he disguises himself in the stolen clothes of a clergyman, and all kinds of hypocrisy are unmasked *(The Pilgrim,* 1923); a jack-of-all trades in a pawnbroker's shop, he dismantles and totally destroys a clock in order to determine its value *(The Pawnshop,* 1916); on the run again, he is taken in by a woman and her pretty daughter whom he saves from drowning. He wakes up next morning and, a victim of a comedy of transposition in which each object seems to suggest something else, he imagines that the pyjamas he has been lent are prison uniform and the bars of his brass bed are those of his cell. Later he drenches the pretty girl's arrogant bearded swain with soda water, and at the end of an apocalyptic final scene in which the ladies are embroiled in a riotous melée, he wins the pretty girl—for an all-too-brief moment *(The Adventurer,* 1917).

After skilfully denouncing capitalist duplicity in *City Lights* (1931), Chaplin attacked the alienation and loss of creativity produced by the "mechanical gestures" of mass production in *Modern Times* (1936). An idyllic digression in which Charlie and the waif set up home together in a shack is a grotesque yet touching variation on the myth of the golden age which cannot blind us to the fact that even this dream has become alien.

An artist's testament

The dream turned into a nightmare with the rise of nazism. *The Great Dictator* (1940), Chaplin's first talking picture, is a satire on Hitler (both Chaplin and Hitler were born in the same month) in which a Jewish barber is mistaken for a dictator.

The myth of the clown is the tightrope walker's poetic response to the values of a world which is hostile, indifferent and absurd. Chaplin had perfectly adapted circus skills to the cinema. His little tramp was an anti-establishment figure, the caricature of a dandy; his poverty was the other side of the coin of social success.

Just out !

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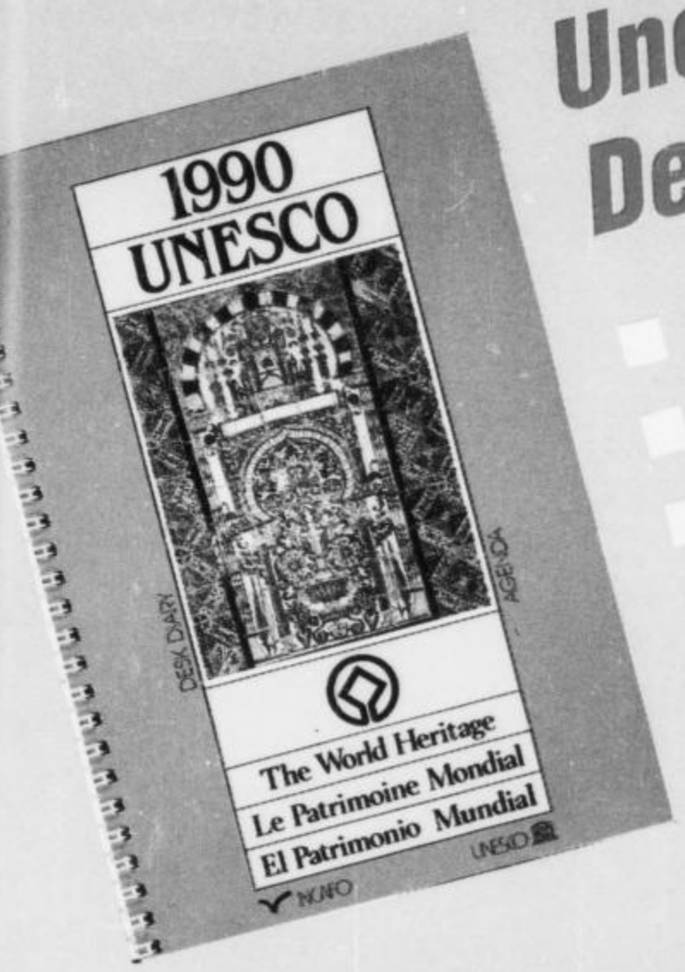

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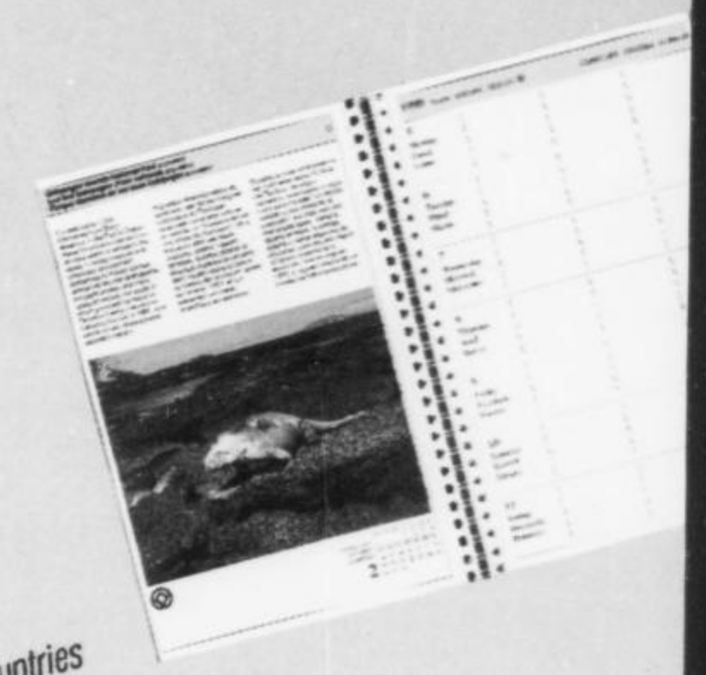

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But Chaplin's testament is *Limelight,* made in 1952, a film which is not so much an autobiography in disguise, as critics have said, but a lucid and serene reflection on the subject of origins.

The film, whose hero Calvero both is and is not Charlie himself, is set in the places where Chaplin grew up and at the time when he was starting out in the cinema, and several members of the Chaplin family acted in it. But in spite of many autobiographical allusions, *Limelight* is much more than autobiography. This nostalgic look in the mirror in which wrinkles have etched the face of youth could perhaps best be described as a portrait of the artist as a showman. Again words from Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* spring to mind: "Likewise the stranger who at certain seconds comes to meet us in a mirror, the familiar and yet alarming brother we encounter in our own photographs is also the absurd."

In a famous scene in *The Gold Rush* (1925), all alone in his cabin on New Year's Eve after the girl he has fallen in love with fails to turn up to have dinner with him, Charlie faces up to a kind of death. On a night when the rest of the world is laughing and celebrating, the lonely outsider spears two bread rolls with forks and makes the miniature feet thus formed perform a dance.

It was in the midst of the festive season that Charles Chaplin died, on Christmas Eve 1977. It is tempting to write a scenario for his last exit... On a snowy night the wind is howling against the door of the wooden shack on the edge of the cliff and the long drop into oblivion. The last log is flickering out. With a shrug of the shoulders, Charlie wraps himself in his shroud. He shakes off the snow, kicks his heels, and with waddling gait takes leave of the world. ■

'Reflections' is a ***Unesco Courier*** feature intended to stimulate thinking on a topic unrelated to the main theme of the current issue and will in some cases, as here, enrich our coverage of a theme treated in a previous issue.

'Slaves of one man'

BY CHANTAL DE GRANDPRÉ

As a follow-up to our June 1989 issue ("1789: An idea that changed the world"), we publish this assessment of the portrayal of the American Indian in 17th- and 18th-century French literature. Descriptions of Indian life were used by the philosophers of the Enlightenment as a powerful and subversive means of expressing criticism of French society.

THE discovery of the New World was a powerful influence for change in the social structure of the *ancien régime*. The American Indians had made their appearance in French literature in the sixteenth century in the writings of Montaigne, but it was not until the following century, when France in her turn ventured into colonization, much later than Spain, Portugal and Britain, that there emerged a corpus of travellers' tales in which the Indians took pride of place.

The first French incursions into North America were linked to the fur trade. The Indians of *Nouvelle France* had no fabulous cities bursting with riches to arouse the greed of the European newcomers and, in the early days, there was no urge to acquire land at all costs. Under these circumstances, the Indian was seen as an indispensable trading partner. He was an equal whom the Europeans hoped soon to fashion into their own likeness.

With this in mind, from 1632 onwards, the Jesuits found themselves taking on an evangelizing role, the success of which depended on the sedentarization of the main tribes (with the exception of the Hurons who were already sedentary and in whose midst a number of missions were soon established), and on learning Indian languages. From then until 1672, the Jesuits sent back to France *Relations* (narrative accounts), describing their experiences in the New World, which met with huge success. The Indians were unquestionably the leading characters in these accounts. Their physical appearance, qualities, defects and beliefs were described at length, with an infectious curiosity and sympathy.

The Jesuits were not to remain for long the only ones interested in the Indians. In the eighteenth century a profusion of texts appeared which confirmed or contradicted each other. The French traveller and writer Baron de la Hontan was perhaps the first of those whose avowed aim was to make a critical assessment of his contemporaries. In 1703, he published *Voyages du Baron de la Hontan dans l'Amérique septentrionale* ("The Travels of Baron de la Hontan in North America"). His work was so successful that it was reprinted twenty-five times between 1703 and 1758. In his *Dialogue ou entretiens entre un sauvage et le Baron de la Hontan* ("Dialogue or Conversations between a Savage and Baron de la Hontan"), the baron ridicules the evangelization project and reports the words of an Indian, Adario, who takes issue with the dogmas of the Catholic Church and then attacks the person of the king: "... we are born free and closely united, each as important as anyone else, whereas you are all the slaves of one man."

In 1724, outraged by the opinions of La Hontan, Father Joseph Lafitau published *Moeurs des sauvages amériquains comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps* ("Customs of the American Savages Compared to those of Ancient Times"), a laborious comparative history of the Indians and the ancient Greeks designed to demonstrate that the peoples of the New World were not devoid of religion. He also aimed to correct the thrust of Jesuit accounts which had affirmed the lack of any religious beliefs among the peoples of Canada, so as to convince metropolitan France of the need to convert them. Above all, his book was a vigorous counter-attack against the views put forward by Baron de la Hontan who sought additional justification for his atheism in the standpoint of the Indians.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *a portrait by the British painter Allan Ramsay (1713-1784).*

In *1839 the French king Louis-Philippe commissioned from Théodore Gudin (1802-1880) this painting showing the discovery of the St. Lawrence river by the French explorer Jacques Cartier.*

The Indian as a critical tool

The year 1770 saw the publication of Abbé Raynal's monumental *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* ("A Philosophical and Political History of European Colonies and Trade in the Two Indias"), to which Diderot has been shown to have made a large contribution.[1] Raynal made use of the Indians as an instrument of criticism, the virulence of which mounted as edition succeeded edition between 1770 and 1798. The divine right of monarchy, property and inequality were all roundly condemned:

"The inequalities of status which we consider so necessary to the maintenance of societies is, in

the eyes of a savage, the height of folly ... but what strikes them as an infamy, as a degradation below that of wild beasts, is that men, who are by nature equal, should degrade themselves so completely as to become dependent upon the desires and whims of a single man."

Everywhere, and especially among the philosophers of the Enlightenment, the Indian is used as a powerful means of expressing criticism of French society. When Rousseau wrote his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inegalité parmi les hommes* ("A Discourse upon the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Mankind", 1755), he did not draw only upon the English example; since 1750, many works had been written on America and Rousseau had read Lescarbot, Lafitau and Baron de la Hontan. From these texts he drew inspiration for his theory of the natural goodness of man, a commonplace of eighteenth-century literature.[2] He radicalized and gave a political dimension to what had previously been limited strictly to the field of observation.

Nevertheless, the Indian did not represent the same idea to all the philosophers of the Enlightenment. In this regard, Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot cannot be lumped together, their ideas being often irreconcilable. The Huron Indian in Voltaire's story *L'Ingénu* ("The Innocent") was far from gentle in his condemnation of French customs and politics, but his viewpoint is biased in that he was a false "Noble Savage", being of French parentage. Voltaire used his Huron to refute Rousseau's theories on education *(L'Ingénu* became a savage although he was naturally a Frenchman), as well as those of Lafitau on the European origin of the Indians.

Furthermore, the Enlightenment philosophers did not exalt the merits of the same Indians; some preferred the tribes of the north to those of the south, and vice versa, and the picture they painted of the Indians varied according to whether they were progressives (like Diderot) or not (like Rousseau). Most of them, however, derided the activities of the Jesuits, who were ferociously caricatured by Voltaire in *L'Ingénu*. In this tale surprise is expressed that the Hurons are not all Catholics. "Haven't the Reverend Fathers converted them all?" asks Mademoiselle de Saint-Yves ingenuously (or perfidiously?).

However opposed to the Jesuits the majority of the authors of certain travellers' tales and the philosophers of the Enlightenment may have been, it cannot be denied that the seed of the ideas they expressed on inequality, the monarchy and property was contained in the Jesuits' *Relations*.

Painstaking and scrupulous observers as they were, the Jesuits noted down everything they saw. No doubt they wanted to reform the Indians, but they also hoped to learn lessons from them that could be applied to the French. They were thus the first to make comparisons between the two societies and to weigh their respective values against each other; and in this confrontation French society did not always come off best. The Jesuits could not but approve of the frugal life-style of the Indians and of their generosity, which was a corollary of the absence of private property and the concept of profit. Thus their readers gradually became accustomed to the idea that man could be happy, free and equal, without a king, without laws and without codified rights. The effect of all this on their contemporaries was undoubtedly detrimental to the interests of the monarchy, since their eulogies of a democratic form of government was an implied criticism of the monarchical system.

Three themes, which were continually being developed and radicalized throughout the eighteenth century, appear in the pages of the Jesuits' *Relations:* criticism of the monarchy, man's relationship with nature and the Indian's right to speak out, and thence his right to power.

The Indians as Republicans

In *Nouvelle France,* though not in France itself, the Jesuits were opposed to royal power. They dreamed of setting up in Canada a system such as they had launched in Paraguay and California—a Jesuit theocratic state which was often seen as a socialist state in embryo. They were the first to see the Indians as "Republicans" in the mould of the ancient Romans.

For them this assimilation justified their boosting of the republican governmental system of the Indians whose egalitarian values and spartan rigour brought into question the France of the day. Father Brébeuf, who lived among the Hurons from 1634 until his death, at the hands of the Iroquois, in 1649, wrote two *Relations* about the Hurons. In the 1636 version he described in detail their system of government, whose democratic nature he lauded. He related that the Hurons had two chiefs, one for war and one to take care of internal affairs. The "captains" of the sub-divisions of these two authorities were elected on the basis of "their intelligence, popularity, wealth and other qualities which earned them esteem in the Land".

In case his meaning was not sufficiently clear, Brébeuf took care to contrast Huron society with that of France: "They attain this level of advancement partly by inheritance and partly by election. They are not normally succeeded by their own children but by their nephews or their grandchildren. Even for them succession to these petty kingships is not automatic, as is the succession of the Dauphin to the throne of France or of French children to the heritage of their fathers; it is dependent upon their having the necessary qualities, on their accepting the honour and on their being acceptable to the whole Country."

In this system Brébeuf detected "the spirit of all republics" and he also praised the freedom of speech which was the rule among the Indians and which he saw as being indissociable from the importance placed on oratory:

"So accustomed are they to this that, since most of them have good minds, they become alert and train themselves wonderfully, to the extent that virtually all of them are able to discuss and reason clearly, and in well-rounded phrases, those things about which they have some knowledge. The Councils which are held in the villages almost every day, concerning all kinds of events, are yet another way in which they learn the art of discourse. Although the elders hold the centre of the stage and the decisions taken depend upon their judgement, anyone who so wishes may attend and everyone has the right to express an opinion."

The Jesuits' position with regard to nature was more complex and contradictory. Although they admired the way in which the Indians lived in harmony with their natural surroundings, the Jesuits nevertheless wanted to "civilize" them, in other words to destroy their privileged links with nature.

Paradoxically, however, they also tried to keep the Indians away from Europeans. This is where the widespread notion of the corrupt civilized man first arose. Although they lived precarious lives, the savages were better than their European counterparts and, once converted, would be superior to them. In praising Indian children, "more lively and more intelligent" than French children, the Jesuits were giving their seal of approval to the Indians' "natural" way of life.

Finally, the Jesuits let the Indians have their say; and often what they had to say turned into an indictment.

"These skilful dialecticians," wrote Gilbert Chinard, "were so enamoured of well reasoned arguments that they could not help reporting at length the disquisitions addressed to them by Indians hostile to their influence. At times they even admitted, *sotto voce,* that perhaps their interlocutors were right."[3]

The Indian free-thinker

In 1634, while spending the winter with a group of Montagnais, Father Lejeune crossed swords with the witch-doctor in the course of a series of oratorical jousts in which he did not always come off best. The witch-doctor evaluated Christian dogma and turned Lejeune's own arguments against him. When the Jesuit extolled the merits of life in the next world, the witch-doctor confessed that he was afraid of dying, but assured his opponent that if "I believed that the other world was so full of delights, I would kill myself so as to enjoy it". But when the Frenchman replied that God forbade us to kill ourselves, the witch-doctor taunted him, as Lejeune reported:

" 'Well, in that case don't kill yourself, I shall kill you to please you, so that you may go to Heaven and enjoy the pleasures of which you speak.'

Illustration from Baron de la Hontan's book "Dialogue or Conversations between a Savage and Baron de la Hontan" (Amsterdam, 1704), in which the author ridicules the evangelization of the North American Indians through a fictitious dialogue with the Indian Adario.

I smiled and replied that I could not accept that anyone could take my life without sinning. 'I see very well,' he replied mockingly, 'that you do not want to die any more than I do.' "

Quite apart from the fact that the Indian of the Jesuits was in no sense a "Noble Savage", it was the Jesuit, the European, who cut a childlike figure, with no patience, no sense of humour and, above all, no oratorical talent.

The mythology of the western film has accustomed us to the idea of Indians mumbling haltingly in the language of the colonists. The *Relations* of the Jesuits, on the contrary, portrayed them as being highly eloquent and stressed the linguistic incompetence of Lejeune at whom the Indians scoffed because he could not express himself correctly in the Montagnais language. "In the end I told them that I was a child and that children make their fathers laugh with their stutterings," he wrote.

The multiplicity of these accounts of scenes from Indian life, in which the writers are bold enough to demonstrate the inefficacy of European speech, is indicative of an overturning of values. By revealing to their contemporaries the Indian as a critic rather than as a "Noble Savage", the Jesuits showed that French society could also be held up to judgement.

This subversive image of the Indian transmitted in travellers' tales and in the *Relations* was to contribute to the ferment of thought of the Enlightenment. In the writings of a Montesquieu or a Voltaire (who had the Jesuit missionary Charlevoix as his source) it strengthened the conviction that the widening of geographical horizons entailed a broadening of the mind. Despite their hostility to the Jesuits, many "philosophers" (Montesquieu, Grimm, Raynal) saw the "socialist" experiments in Paraguay in a favourable light. From Montaigne's essay on "cannibals" to Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, the Indian's role as a social and political critic grew increasingly important in Western ideology. And this fascination with the Other contributed in no small measure to the great explosion of 1789. ■

CHANTAL DE GRANDPRÉ,
of Canada, is a lecturer in the literature of Quebec at the university of Paris X. She is the author of many articles and studies including an essay on American literature written in collaboration with Denis Egan and published in the encyclopaedia *Clartés* (Paris, 1988).

1. Michèle Duchet, *Diderot et l'histoire des deux Indes ou l'écriture fragmentaire* (1978).
2. Gilbert Chinard, *Influence des récits de voyages sur la philosophie de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1911).
3. Gilbert Chinard, *L'amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au 17e et au 18e siècle* (1913, reissued 1970).

Understanding global change

BY ALISON McKELVEY CLAYSON

A cloud of ice in the stratosphere. Scientists think ice clouds may encourage chemical reactions leading to the destruction of the ozone layer.

FOR more than a decade, many scientists have warned that industry and agriculture were spewing enough gases into the atmosphere to heat up the Earth and eventually produce disastrous climatic changes. The gases are known as "greenhouse gases", while the phenomenon of global warming is called the "greenhouse effect" because the gases that accumulate—like the glass panes of the greenhouse—trap the Sun's heat and prevent it from escaping back into space.

Some of these gases are also responsible for destroying the protective layer of ozone in the Earth's atmosphere. This too is very serious because without its protective blanket, the Earth absorbs increased amounts of ultraviolet radiation from the Sun, which can cause skin cancer, cataracts and certain immunological diseases.

Despite the scientists' warning, global warming trends received little public attention until a string of weather-related disasters in 1988 seemed to drive the point home. Heat waves and drought throughout the United States, hurricanes in the Caribbean, and flooding in Bangladesh could all be previews of what will happen with increasing frequency if the atmosphere warms by between 2° and 5° by the middle of the next century, as some scientists have predicted.

Excess carbon dioxide is the main culprit, although other gases such as the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used to pressurize aerosol sprays and insulate refrigerators are also implicated, as are natural gases such as methane. Methane is produced by bacteria in the guts of termites and cattle, in the green muck of rice paddies, in the rotting garbage of landfills, and in the world's 1.5 million square kilometres of peat bogs and tundra.

In 1880, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was 290 parts per million (ppm). It is now about 350 ppm. Most of the extra carbon has come from burning fossil fuels such as coal or oil, and as a side effect of destroying forests: when 1 tonne of carbon in the form of coal is burnt, it produces about 4 tonnes of carbon dioxide. Studies of air bubbles trapped inside ice cores from the Antarctic confirm that roughly the same concentration of carbon dioxide persisted throughout the past 10,000 years—until the industrial era disturbed the balance.

Of course, the disasters of summer 1988 may have had nothing to do with the greenhouse effect. They may just have been part of the random and natural variations in weather that occur everywhere. The scientists themselves do not agree in their interpretation of these events, but no one disputes the fact that the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased, that the rate of climate change is likely to be faster than at any time in human history, and that such change will be fundamentally destabilizing and disruptive to our planet since living organisms and the ecosystems they inhabit cannot adapt that readily to rapid change.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBAL WARMING

An increase in world temperatures over the next fifty years seems likely to cause a chain reaction. According to computer models used to predict what might happen, the greenhouse effect will dramatically alter patterns of rainfall: some places will be wetter, others drier. This will affect vegetation, which in turn will affect the animals that depend on plants for survival. Changes in vegetation can themselves cause changes in climate. Global warming may devastate food crops in some areas, encourage soil erosion and create conditions in which pests are unleashed in a new environment.

The consequences for agriculture are equally serious: we have seen the sad effects of the regional warming trend over the past twenty years in sub-Saharan Africa, where a growing population, deteriorating soil conditions and changing climate have combined to overwhelm the fragile food supply system, and there have been famine and misery. In China, the desert is spreading at the rate of 1,500 square kilometres a year.

One of the most significant results of the greenhouse effect is that it causes the sea level to rise. The oceans have already risen about 13 cm in the last century. What would societies do if the oceans were to rise by 1-1.5 metres, as some scientists predict? Major cities like New York, Bangkok, Calcutta, Rio de Janeiro and Seoul could be flooded out; countries like Bangladesh and The Netherlands might eventually disappear, while entire populations could become refugees from low-lying coastal areas.

Another factor in sea level rise is the melting of icecaps. Researchers suspect the greenhouse effect to be at work, for a whole series of massive icebergs have been breaking off the Antarctic ice shelf and melting into the sea. Higher

global temperatures not only melt polar ice, they make water expand, thus causing floods.

THE QUICKENING PACE OF CHANGE

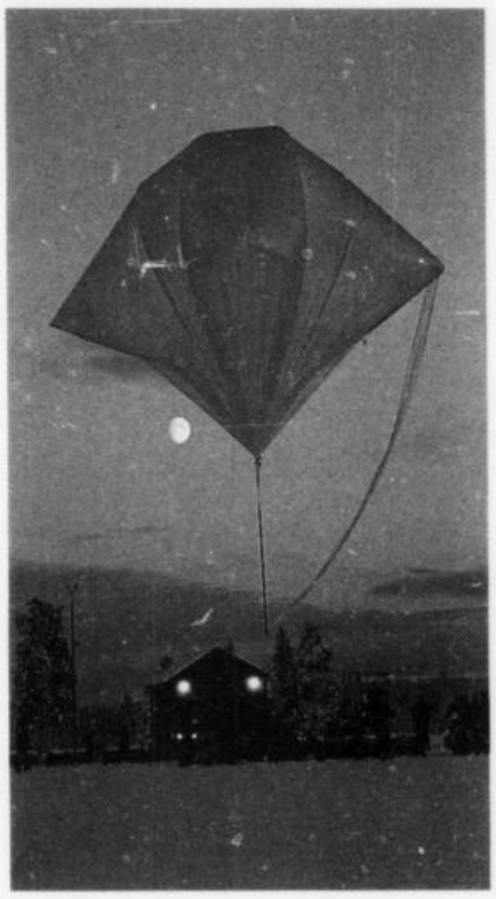
In 1800, at the beginning of the European Industrial Revolution, there were a thousand million human beings on the Earth. By 1930 the number had doubled, and by 1975 it had doubled again. If current birth-rates hold, then the world's present population of 5.1 thousand million should double again during the next 40 years, with 90 per cent of that growth occurring in poorer, developing countries.

Still, it is not so much the numbers that alarm—although the prospect of feeding and providing for 10 thousand million human beings is daunting—but rather the effect that Homo sapiens will have on the Earth's environment, and the rate at which human-induced change and degradation will occur. It is the need to provide for so many people that puts an unbearable pressure on natural resources and the environment.

Change is natural. But in recent years man has accelerated the rate of change—by profligate burning of fossil fuels such as oil and coal, by wanton desecration of forests, by careless introduction of poisons into the soil and water supplies, and by uncontrolled emission of dangerous automobile and industrial fumes into the air—so that the delicate equilibrium that has always regulated the total Earth system and its component parts has been destroyed: the geosphere (the planet), the atmosphere (the air around the Earth) and the biosphere (that overlapping area between the two where life exists) are out of kilter. Man has undermined his own life-support system, and the consequences may well be irreversible. If they are, then the 10,000 years since the last Ice Age may have witnessed the dawn and the decline of modern man.

THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF EARTH EVER UNDERTAKEN

To understand what has happened, it is necessary to understand the impact of human activity on the environment, on the concentrations and mixtures of gases found in the atmosphere, on climate, and how these interact. The scientific community has accepted this challenge, and through a worldwide non-governmental organization called the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), it has launched an international study of Global Change known as the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP).



A balloon is launched at Kiruna (Sweden) early in 1989 as part of an international scientific research project to monitor the ozone layer above the Arctic.

The subject of the study is the Earth itself and the process of change, whether induced by human beings or natural forces. The scientists will seek to describe and explain these occurrences, perhaps also to predict them. But the ultimate goal of the Programme is to translate this knowledge into terms the decision-makers will comprehend so that appropriate actions can be taken at national and international levels to minimize the destructive consequences of such changes for man's well-being and survival.

The Global Change study will be the most comprehensive investigation of Earth ever undertaken. It will link scores of research institutions, international organizations and academic centres, and will engage thousands of scientists in every continent. For the first time, the work of physicists, astronomers, biologists, chemists, data processors, geographers, oceanographers, meteorologists, palaeontologists, geologists, and many other disciplines will be harnessed for a common objective, studying and interpreting changes in the Earth's physical, chemical and biological systems viewed as an interacting whole.

In 1988, under the aegis of ICSU, a Global Action Plan was drawn up by a Special Committee of 19 scientists from 16 countries and six continents. Their Plan identified four basic research themes.

Documenting and predicting global change: This will require a worldwide network of monitoring "observatories", both on-the-ground and by remote sensing from space.

Improving understanding of major forces of change: Variations in the Earth's orbit and in amounts of solar energy reaching the biosphere can have profound effects on life systems. So can volcanic eruptions of gases and dust, which some scientists believe may be held accountable for mass extinctions of the past. Human activities are change forces of comparable magnitude. The Global Change Programme will assess the relative importance of such factors.

Understanding interactions in the Total Earth System: The study of how physical, chemical and biological systems, including those influenced by man, interact in a self-regulating Total Earth System, is a very new science.

Assessing the effects of global change on our resource base: As knowledge about global change improves, it must be used to predict local and regional effects on resources such as agriculture, forests, and fisheries.

These themes are very broad—too broad, really, to be of much use in designing specific research projects, although they are helpful in providing a general context and framework. Instead, they are being broken down into smaller chunks and parcelled out among an expanding number of committees and other groups whose members are drawn from institutions affiliated with ICSU. The interested parties include Unesco, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), regional organizations and national scientific bodies including 37 national committees, to name but a few. In the interdisciplinary spirit of the IGBP, the main project areas being developed focus on the linkages between systems. For instance:

- Terrestrial biospheric-atmospheric chemistry interactions;
- Marine biosphere-atmosphere interactions;
- Biospheric aspects of the hydrological cycle;
- Effects of climate change on terrestrial ecosystems;
- Global changes of the past.

A WORLDWIDE PROGRAMME OF SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION

The challenge of a scientific programme like this one is to go beyond sectoral viewpoints and disciplinary biases to achieve a sense of the Total Earth System and the interaction of its component parts. Two working groups whose mandates cut across all specializations have been established. One will study the ways in which modern data and information systems can be used in handling the vast and complex mass of data generated by the IGBP, and the other will look specifically at the establishment of Regional Research Centres. It is proposed to set up about 10 multi-purpose centres for the analysis, interpretation and modelling of data based on regional observations. These centres will be linked to worldwide monitoring networks and research sites.

The IGBP is a long-term effort to study the causes and effects of global change. Some projects may be accomplished in a few years, while others may take 20 to 30 years just to accumulate a useful data base. What matters in the end, however, is that all the different pieces of the mosaic we call Earth should be seen as a whole, without regard to geographical or disciplinary boundaries. Only a worldwide programme of scientific co-operation and research can hope to achieve such a goal. ■

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The UNESCO COURIER

42nd YEAR

Published monthly in 34 languages and in braille by Unesco, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

31, rue François Bonvin, 75015 Paris, France.

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Sales director: Benoît Rosier
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Tel.: 45.68.45.65
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IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE
(Printed in France) - DEPOT LEGAL : C1 - OCTOBRE 1989
Photocomposition: The *Unesco Courier*
Photogravure-impression: Maury Imprimeur S.A., Z.I. route d'Etampes, 45330 Malesherbes

ISSN 0041-5278 — N° 10 - 1989 - OPI - 89 - 1 - 473 A

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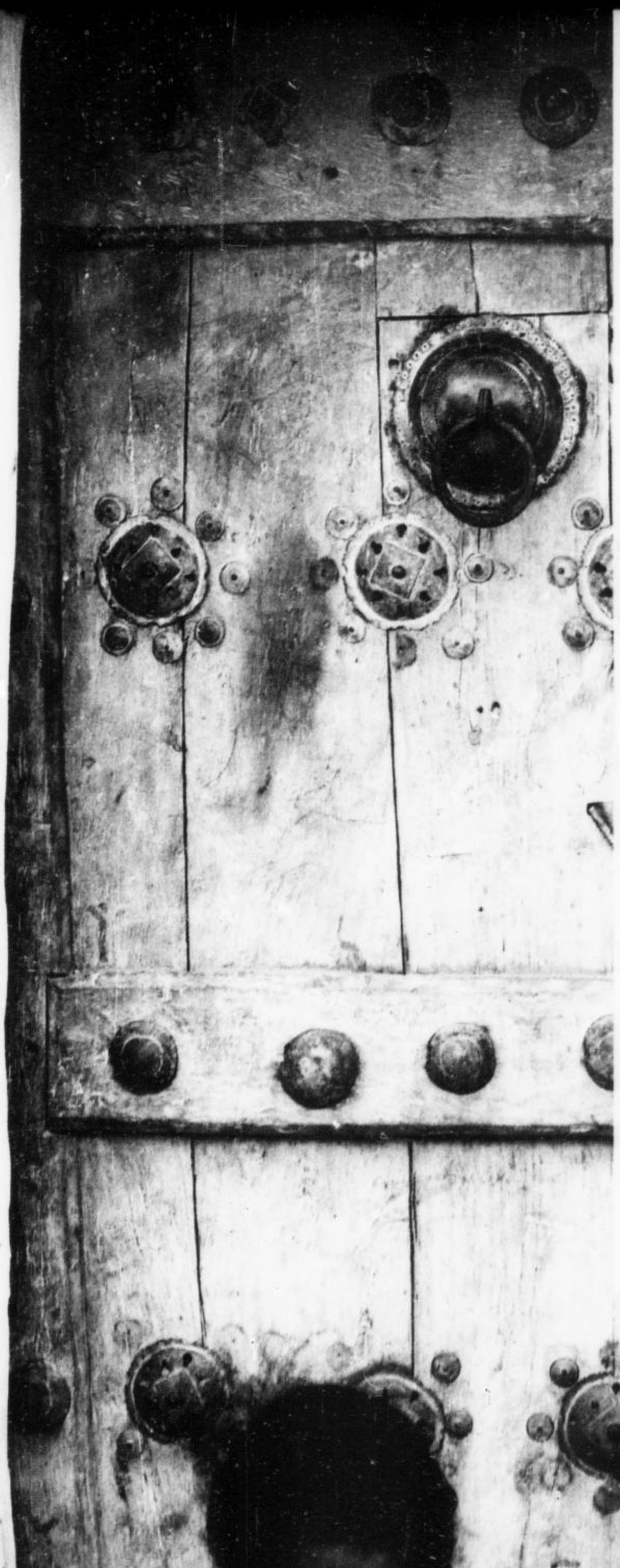
Correction (September 1989 issue): **Page 14:** Photos from *Histoire des Beni Hilal et de ce qui leur advint dans leur marche vers l'Ouest*, by M. Galley and A. Ayoub, Association des classiques africains, Paris, 1983. Top illustration: a lithograph from the Museum of the Institute of Geography, Cairo; lower illustration shows a Tunisian painting on glass (M. Galley collection) which featured as the cover of the book mentioned above.



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